"I love Trigan Empire! It's absolutely epic."
DUNCAN JONES
THE RISE AND FALL OF
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE™
VOLUME II
MIKE BUTTERWORTH - DON LAWRENCE
RON EMBLETON

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THE RISE AND FALL OF

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

WRITER
MIKE BUTTERWORTH
ARTIST
DON LAWRENCE

VOLUME II

FOREWORD

I've never taken L.S.D. but people who have done often describe an experience that sounds just like the first time I encountered **"The Trigan Empire"**!

I remember the moment vividly. It was October 1975, in a newsagent on a British Forces base in Osnabrück, Germany. I was only six years old and was with my Dad. I gazed over all the comics that were for sale. There were the usual titles that graced those shelves: weekly comics such as **Valiant, Wizard, Victor and Hotspur**. However, on this day, there was also a comic I hadn't seen before: **Vulcan**! It was different to the others: it was smaller and printed on glossy paper. I browsed through it and saw it contained a variety of strips I was already familiar with from other IPC titles; series like The Spider, Robot Archie and The Steel Claw… all good stuff.

***And then, it happened*!** I saw the **"The Trigan Empire"** for the first time!

It was unlike any comic strip I'd ever seen before! Other British comics were mostly black & white and printed (badly) on the roughest, cheapest paper available. Suddenly I was looking at fully painted, colour, photo-realistic artwork beautifully reproduced on glossy, high-quality paper. It blew my tiny mind!

I asked my Dad if he'd buy this issue of **Vulcan** for me. He seemed a bit reluctant and asked to look at it first. He flicked through the pages unenthusiastically until, all of a sudden, his expression changed. He looked surprised. Impressed, even. I guessed immediately he'd just reached the episode of **"The Trigan Empire".** "Oh, this is good." he said. The purchase was made.

Every week my Dad would come home from work with the latest issue of **Vulcan** and we'd read it together. We didn't have a television at the time, so we read a lot as a family. We would chat about the stories we read in the comics. That's where my love of comics grew, I guess.

One day I found, to my horror, that someone had cut all the **"Trigan Empire"** pages out of my **Vulcan** comics! My Dad turned out to be the culprit, albeit one with the best of intentions: he wanted to get them professionally bound into their own book. Unaware of this, I'd already retrieved the pages and bound them with sticky-tape into my own collected edition, complete with a cover featuring Emperor Trigo, which I'd drawn myself in green felt-tip. Eventually, a kindly Uncle (who worked as a bookbinder for the British Museum) rebound those same tape-stained pages within beautiful cloth-covered covers, creating a one-of-a-kind edition that I treasure to this day.

Unfortunately, **Vulcan** only lasted 28 issues and it was folded into the **Valiant** comic, but that wasn't the last I saw of **"The Trigan Empire"**. It also appeared in a German version of **Vulcan** called **Kobra**, a publication that carried on beyond the demise of its English counterpart. I discovered it was also published in magazine called **"Look & Learn",** but I wasn't fooled: it wasn't by the same artist as the one who'd painted it so brilliantly in the pages of **Vulcan** weekly!

I eventually discovered the identity of my favourite artist in 1980 when **2000AD Weekly** ran a review in Prog 147 of a big collected edition of **"The Trigan Empire"** published by Hamlyn Books. His name was *Don Lawrence*. I would continue to run across his work over the next few years. On holiday in Berlin, I bought a German collection called **"Trigan 4: Die fünf Aufgaben".** I found a copy of the **"Action Holiday Special"** that ran a reprint of a black and white story he did called "Karl the Viking". I remember how excited I was when a new book featuring his art called **"Storm: The Deep World"** hit the shelves of WHSmiths in 1983. It wasn't **"The Trigan Empire"**, but it would do!

Buoyed by my discovery of this new book, I toyed with the idea of writing to the television show "Jim'll Fix It" to ask if they could arrange for me to meet Don Lawrence, but luckily these measures proved unnecessary. A new boy appeared at my school in Willingdon called Kai, whose father was a comic-strip illustrator, apparently. One day we were in the dinner queue together and I enquired about the strips his Dad had drawn. To my utter astonishment his father turned out to be Don Lawrence! This seemed to be some kind of coincidence of on a cosmic scale!

Well, as you can imagine, I begged Kai to meet his father and not long after I got to visit the artist at his studio in Jevington accompanied by my own Dad. It was like a dream come true. Don Lawrence was a tall, slim, bearded figure with tanned skin, wreathed in cigarette smoke. He seemed very bohemian, and far more educated than anyone I'd ever met before. But most of all he was extremely generous with his time, and he patiently answered all my questions and showed me his stunning original art. I went home with a pile of free **"Storm"** books in my arms.

But if Don thought he'd seen the last of me, he was sorely wrong! I'm ashamed to say I did pester him somewhat, and once a month he kindly let me visit his studio to watch him work. By then, I was determined I was going to become a comic strip artist too, and Don became a something of a mentor figure to me. He opened my eyes to all sorts of ideas and influences that I had never encountered before. He introduced me to artists, music, books and films I had never heard of. It was through him I discovered European comic-book artists like Jean "Moebius" Giraud , Enki Bilal, Francois Schuiten and Alfonso Font. He'd met most of these guys and he'd occasionally hang out with them at European Conventions. But it was also a two-way street: I showed Don all the comics I bought, including *2000ad* and *Warrior Monthly*, and introduced him to the work of other artists I admired, like Cam Kennedy, Steve Dillon and Garry Leach. I remember him being really impressed by the artwork that Alex Ross did on *Marvels*.

I wasn't the only aspiring comic strip artist in the area, though. A young Liam Sharp had also been taken under Don's wing and he was eventually given a job as his apprentice. I was so envious! I needn't have worried, though, as once Liam had finished his year with Don, I was then offered a similar position, only with a significant difference. Where Liam had been trained specifically to be his assistant, Don was teaching me the basics so I could go out and find my own work (in return for 10% of everything I earned during my first year as a professional.) So, in 1987, I began my year as a student of Don Lawrence. Each morning I'd cycle four miles uphill to reach his studio in the heart of the Sussex Downs. I would then spend the day doing

art exercises chosen by Don to improve my technique. Don claimed he couldn't teach someone how to draw; that was only something they could teach themselves. However he could teach skills like inking and painting in gouache, his medium of choice on "Storm". He believed the best way to learn such techniques was to do painstakingly accurate reproductions of other artists' work. In my case, that included copying pieces by Brian Bolland, Frank Hampson, Moebius and one of Don's own his own pages from *Storm*. I had to be meticulous in my duplication of this artwork; he would spot any deviation from the original within seconds and berate me for them!

Mostly I learnt from watching Don paint and draw. To this day I'm baffled by Don's ability. He was able to summon any image onto the page with no problem at all. I often wondered if he had some sort of "photographic-memory" as I never once saw him use any photo-reference. He was amazing at anatomy, architecture, atmosphere, lighting, design; all the elements needed to create great comic strip art. And he *really* loved his job too. I never once heard him complain about having to draw. He thought deeply about the fantastical worlds he was creating and would often let me make suggestions. My ideas were frequently greeted with enthusiasm and incorporated into the art.

To an outsider he looked a very laid-back, hippy-type character: he always had a joint on the go. I'll always associate that aroma with my time in his studio. I never partook, as my father made Don promise he would never offer any to me! But he was quite an intellectual too: quite perceptive and extremely left wing. We would listen to the news every day and discuss politics while we worked. I think he, his family and friends belonged to a different class to me. I was very conscious of being more "working class" than them, and I felt a little inferior in their company. But they were very kind and welcoming. Their cottage was full of these relaxed and friendly Burmese cats that lay around all day, purring… or they would come and sit on you while you were working. I loved that.

I remember him playing cards a lot with himself, sat on the floor. It was his way of taking his mind off his work. He said he could only sustain the concentration needed to draw for a certain amount of time, and then he'd have to divert his attention onto something else completely different. Eventually, he bought a Bar Billiards table and he would often play on that. He was extremely fond of cricket and would have that playing on the television while he was working. I found it mind-numbingly boring. His house was full of books and videos and exotic ornaments. He collected vintage toy cars and had them in glass cases on the wall. Overall, it was very homely. There was always a log-fire burning and dogs lying round lazily. His wife, Liz was a terrific cook and I frequently stayed over for dinner. Don also had great taste in music and we would listen to Pink Floyd and Brian Eno nearly every day! It was idyllic.

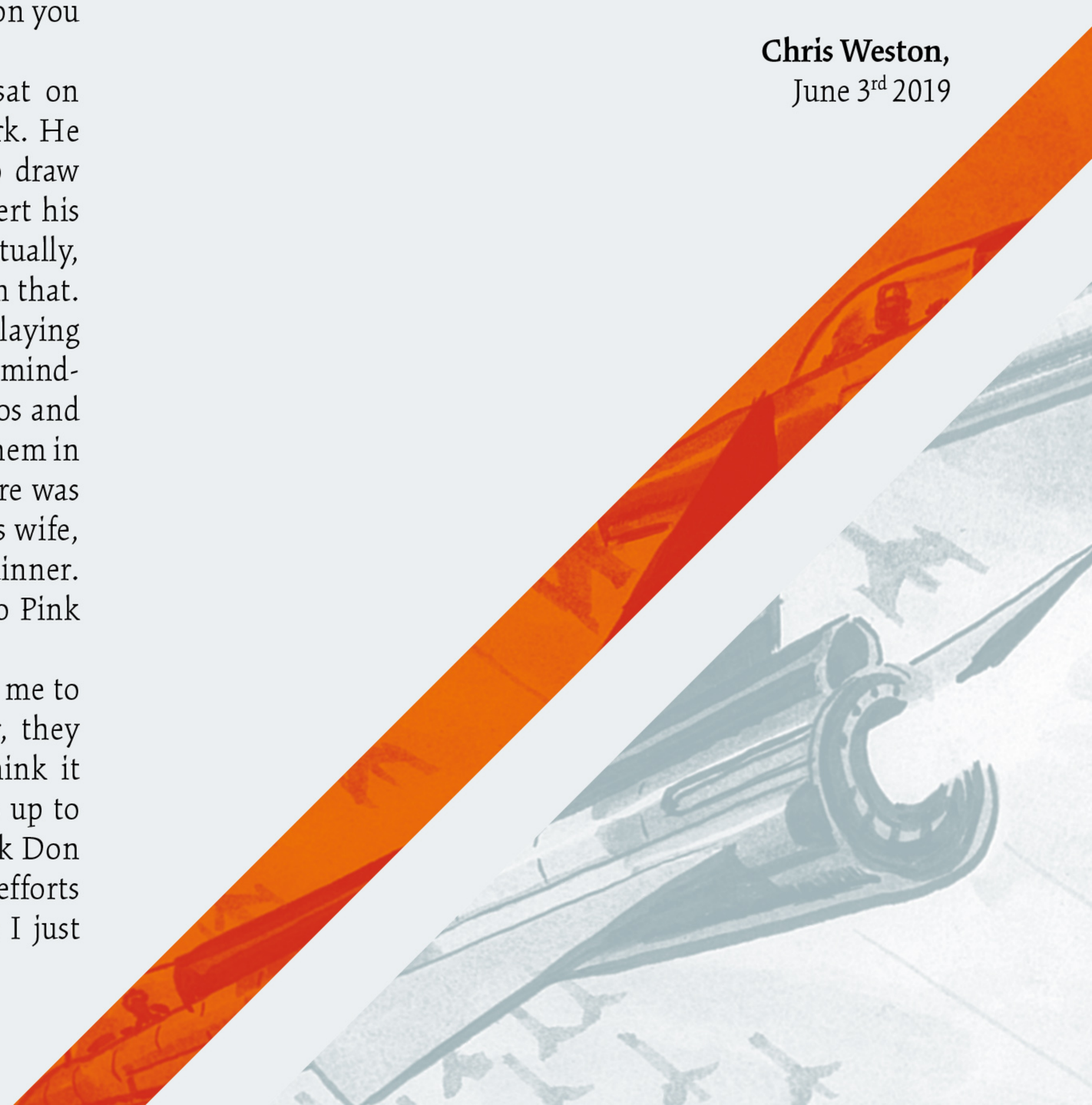
Don helped me build a portfolio of art and introduced me to his ex-agent, Pat Kellegher of Temple-Rogers. Together, they gave my career an amazing launch. In retrospect, I think it happened *too* quickly, possibly, and I'm not sure if I was up to the task when I look back at my early work. I don't think Don thought I was, either. He was extremely critical of my efforts and could be quite brutal sometimes. He once told me I just couldn't draw, which was very painful to hear. But I think he may have appreciated my work ethic. The greatest thing Don taught me was *discipline*: the ability to just sit and get on with your work even when there's loads of other things you'd rather be doing. Because I was so in awe of Don and nervous of his criticism, I always gave my work one hundred per cent effort. And I still do. I don't think I would have developed that ethic under anyone else's tutelage.

I continued to work in his studio for a while after my time as an apprentice, but eventually it became more practical for me to work from my own home… much to his relief, probably! He had another student after me, but they didn't go on to have a career in the comics industry. Don and I stayed in touch, though, and I would go round to show him what I was up to. I remained eager for his approval, and I think I only achieved it when I showed him my work on *"The Filth"*. He genuinely seemed to like it!

Throughout my career I have never seen much of Don's influence on my work, to my regret. I think Brian Bolland and Moebius have informed my art far more than he has. However, more recently, I have painted a few pictures that remind me a little of Don's style. In many ways, I now feel far more ready to learn from him than I did when I was young. I would love to meet up with him again and ask him some more technical questions. But, alas, Don passed away on the 29th December 2003.

I'll always be grateful for my time with him, and I have taken on my own apprentices as a way of paying back the karmic debt. Don appears in my dreams occasionally, where I remain in awe of the man. Recently, I was asked to create some concept art for a *Trigan Empire* television series. It was so great to revisit the World I discovered as a six-year old in that newsagent in Germany and it's wonderful to think a whole new generation might discover Don's work through these new volumes Rebellion are putting out. It literally changed my life.

Chris Weston,
June 3rd 2019



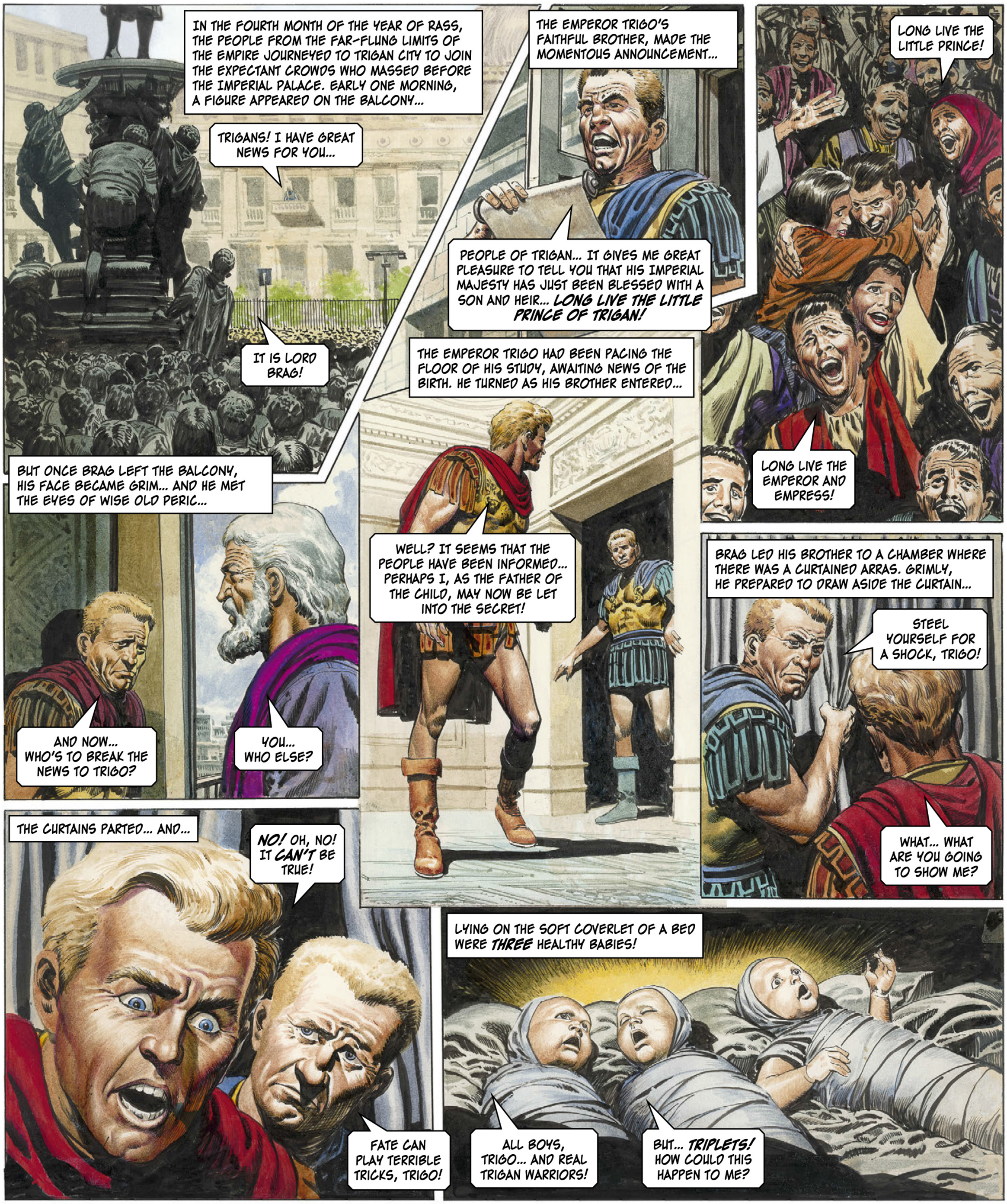
XIV

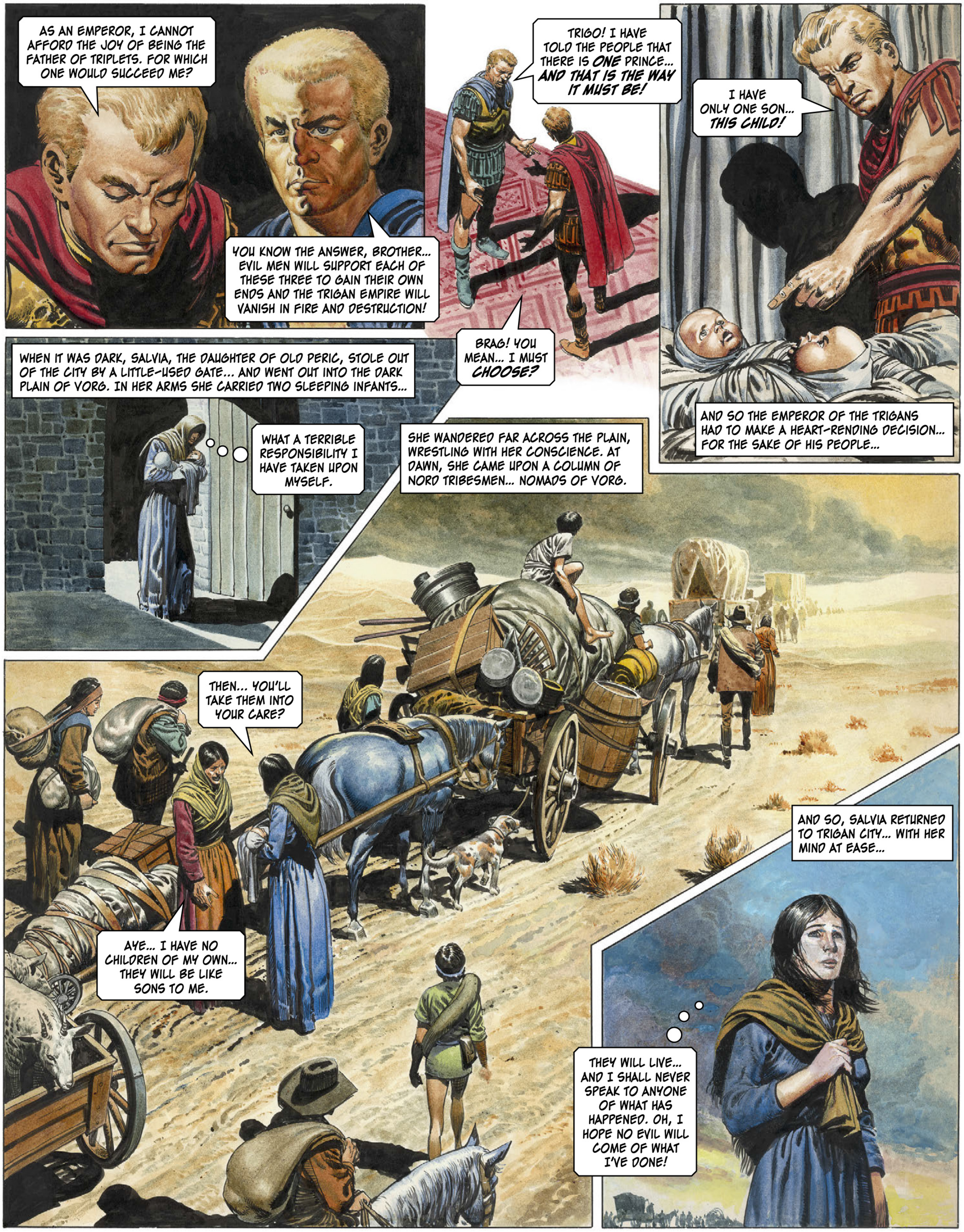
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE THREE PRINCES

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 332-362

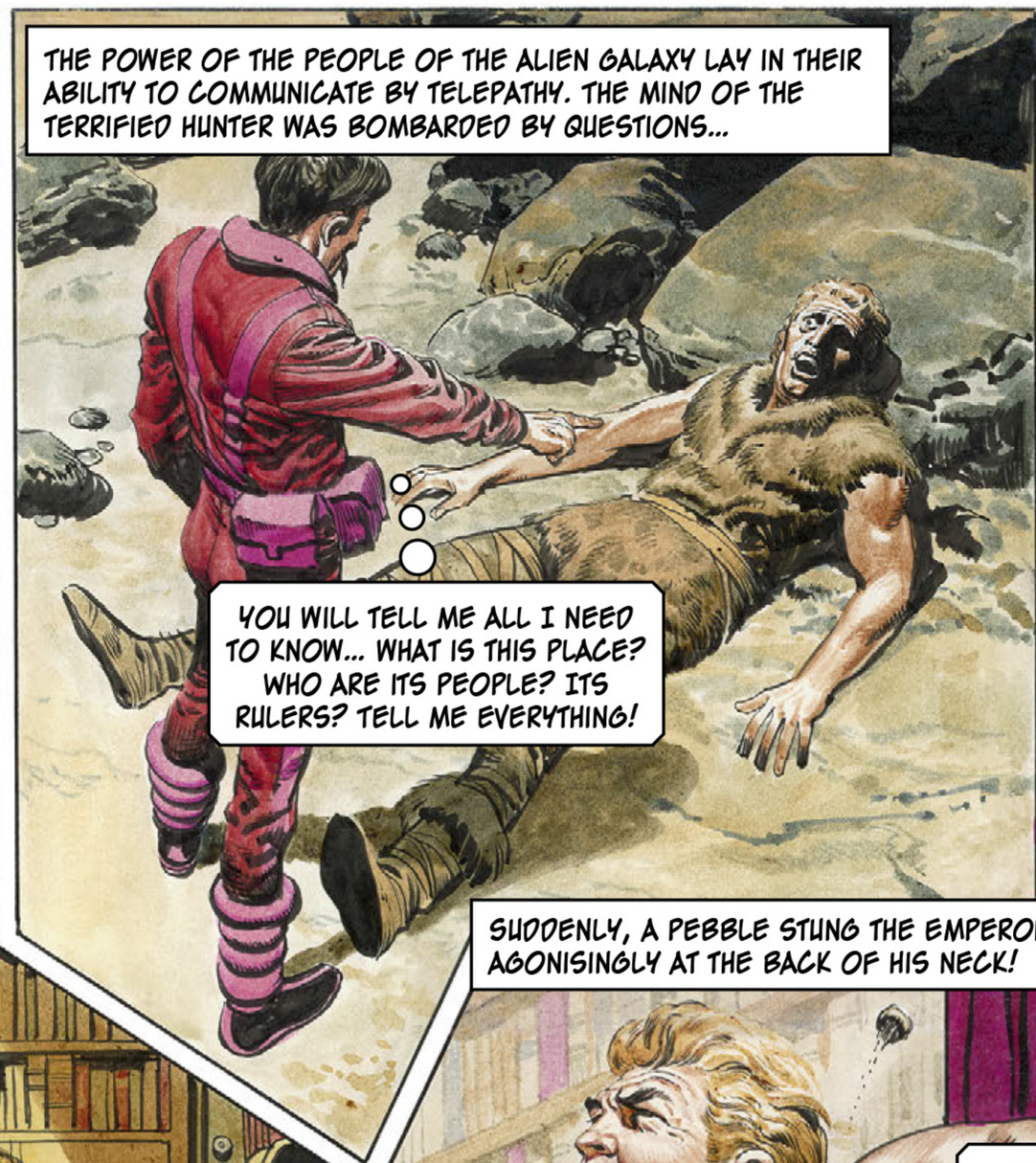
24th May – 21st December 1968


IN THE FOURTH MONTH OF THE YEAR OF RASS, THE PEOPLE FROM THE FAR-FLUNG LIMITS OF THE EMPIRE JOURNEYED TO TRIGAN CITY TO JOIN THE EXPECTANT CROWDS WHO MASSED BEFORE THE IMPERIAL PALACE. EARLY ONE MORNING, A FIGURE APPEARED ON THE BALCONY...
TRIGANS! I HAVE GREAT NEWS FOR YOU...
IT IS LORD BRAG!
THE EMPEROR TRIGO'S FAITHFUL BROTHER, MADE THE MOMENTOUS ANNOUNCEMENT...
PEOPLE OF TRIGAN... IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO TELL YOU THAT HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY HAS JUST BEEN BLESSED WITH A SON AND HEIR... LONG LIVE THE LITTLE PRINCE OF TRIGAN!
LONG LIVE THE LITTLE PRINCE!
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR AND EMPRESS!
THE EMPEROR TRIGO HAD BEEN PACING THE FLOOR OF HIS STUDY, AWAITING NEWS OF THE BIRTH. HE TURNED AS HIS BROTHER ENTERED...
WELL? IT SEEMS THAT THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INFORMED... PERHAPS I, AS THE FATHER OF THE CHILD, MAY NOW BE LET INTO THE SECRET!
BUT ONCE BRAG LEFT THE BALCONY, HIS FACE BECAME GRIM... AND HE MET THE EYES OF WISE OLD PERIC...
AND NOW... WHO'S TO BREAK THE NEWS TO TRIGO?
YOU... WHO ELSE?
BRAG LED HIS BROTHER TO A CHAMBER WHERE THERE WAS A CURTAINED ARRAS. GRIMLY, HE PREPARED TO DRAW ASIDE THE CURTAIN...
STEEL YOURSELF FOR A SHOCK, TRIGO!
WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW ME?
THE CURTAINS PARTED... AND...
NO! OH, NO! IT CAN'T BE TRUE!
FATE CAN PLAY TERRIBLE TRICKS, TRIGO!
LYING ON THE SOFT COVERLET OF A BED WERE THREE HEALTHY BABIES!
ALL BOYS, TRIGO... AND REAL TRIGAN WARRIORS!
BUT... TRIPLETS! HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN TO ME?

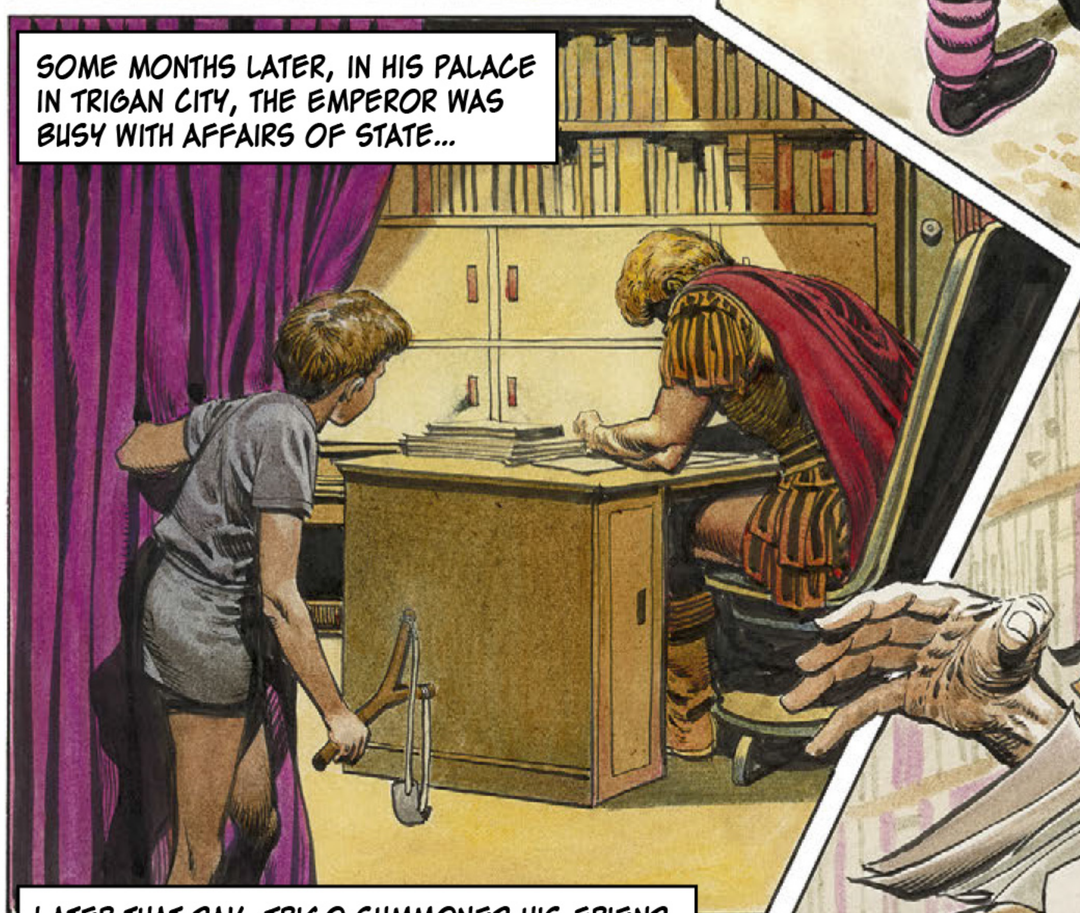

AS AN EMPEROR, I CANNOT AFFORD THE JOY OF BEING THE FATHER OF TRIPLETS. FOR WHICH ONE WOULD SUCCEED ME?
YOU KNOW THE ANSWER, BROTHER... EVIL MEN WILL SUPPORT EACH OF THESE THREE TO GAIN THEIR OWN ENDS AND THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WILL VANISH IN FIRE AND DESTRUCTION!
TRIGO! I HAVE TOLD THE PEOPLE THAT THERE IS ONE PRINCE... AND THAT IS THE WAY IT MUST BE!
BRAG! YOU MEAN... I MUST CHOOSE?
I HAVE ONLY ONE SON... THIS CHILD!
AND SO THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS HAD TO MAKE A HEART-RENDING DECISION... FOR THE SAKE OF HIS PEOPLE...
WHEN IT WAS DARK, SALVIA, THE DAUGHTER OF OLD PERIC, STOLE OUT OF THE CITY BY A LITTLE-USED GATE... AND WENT OUT INTO THE DARK PLAIN OF VORG. IN HER ARMS SHE CARRIED TWO SLEEPING INFANTS...
WHAT A TERRIBLE RESPONSIBILITY I HAVE TAKEN UPON MYSELF.
SHE WANDERED FAR ACROSS THE PLAIN, WRESTLING WITH HER CONSCIENCE. AT DAWN, SHE CAME UPON A COLUMN OF NORD TRIBESMEN... NOMADS OF VORG.
THEN... YOU'LL TAKE THEM INTO YOUR CARE?
AYE... I HAVE NO CHILDREN OF MY OWN... THEY WILL BE LIKE SONS TO ME.
AND SO, SALVIA RETURNED TO TRIGAN CITY... WITH HER MIND AT EASE...
THEY WILL LIVE... AND I SHALL NEVER SPEAK TO ANYONE OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED. OH, I HOPE NO EVIL WILL COME OF WHAT I'VE DONE!

YEARS LATER, A STRANGE CRAFT FROM A FAR-DISTANT GALAXY PASSED CLOSE TO THE PLANET ELEKTON...
AND THEN – DISASTER! THE CRAFT WAS STRUCK BY A GIANT METEORITE!
ONE MAN SURVIVED THE CALAMITY AND EJECTED HIMSELF FROM THE DOOMED CRAFT... TOWARDS THE ATMOSPHERE OF ELEKTON.
THE ALIEN ESCAPE CAPSULE CAME TO REST ON THE PLAIN OF VORG, IN THE TRIGAN EMPIRE...
HOODED, DARK EYES SCANNED THE EMPTY HORIZON. THE PEOPLE OF THAT DISTANT GALAXY WERE OF A FANTASTICALLY SUPERIOR INTELLIGENCE AND THEIR MINDS WERE DRIVEN BY ONE FORCE... EVIL!
SO, I AM DOOMED TO REMAIN FOR EVER ON THIS ACCURSED PLANET. THEN I MUST MAKE IT MINE... ALL MINE!
SOME DAYS LATER, A WANDERING VORG HUNTER WAS PREPARING HIS SIMPLE MEAL WHEN HE SAW THE STRANGER APPROACHING...
WHO ARE YOU?

AND THEN...
NO! DON'T HURT ME! DON'T-

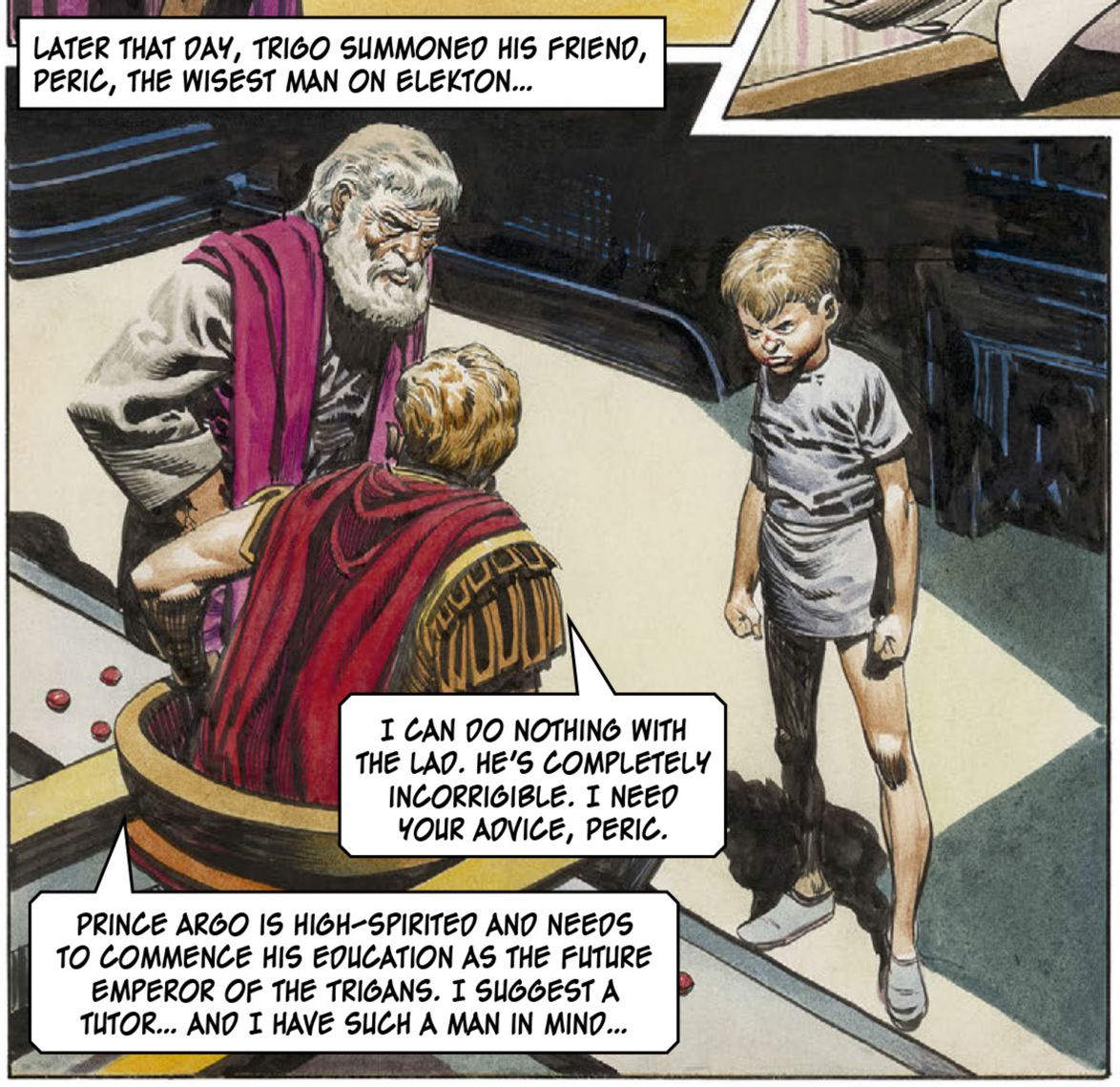

THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE OF THE ALIEN GALAXY LAY IN THEIR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE BY TELEPATHY. THE MIND OF THE TERRIFIED HUNTER WAS BOMBARDED BY QUESTIONS...
YOU WILL TELL ME ALL I NEED TO KNOW... WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHO ARE ITS PEOPLE? ITS RULERS? TELL ME EVERYTHING!

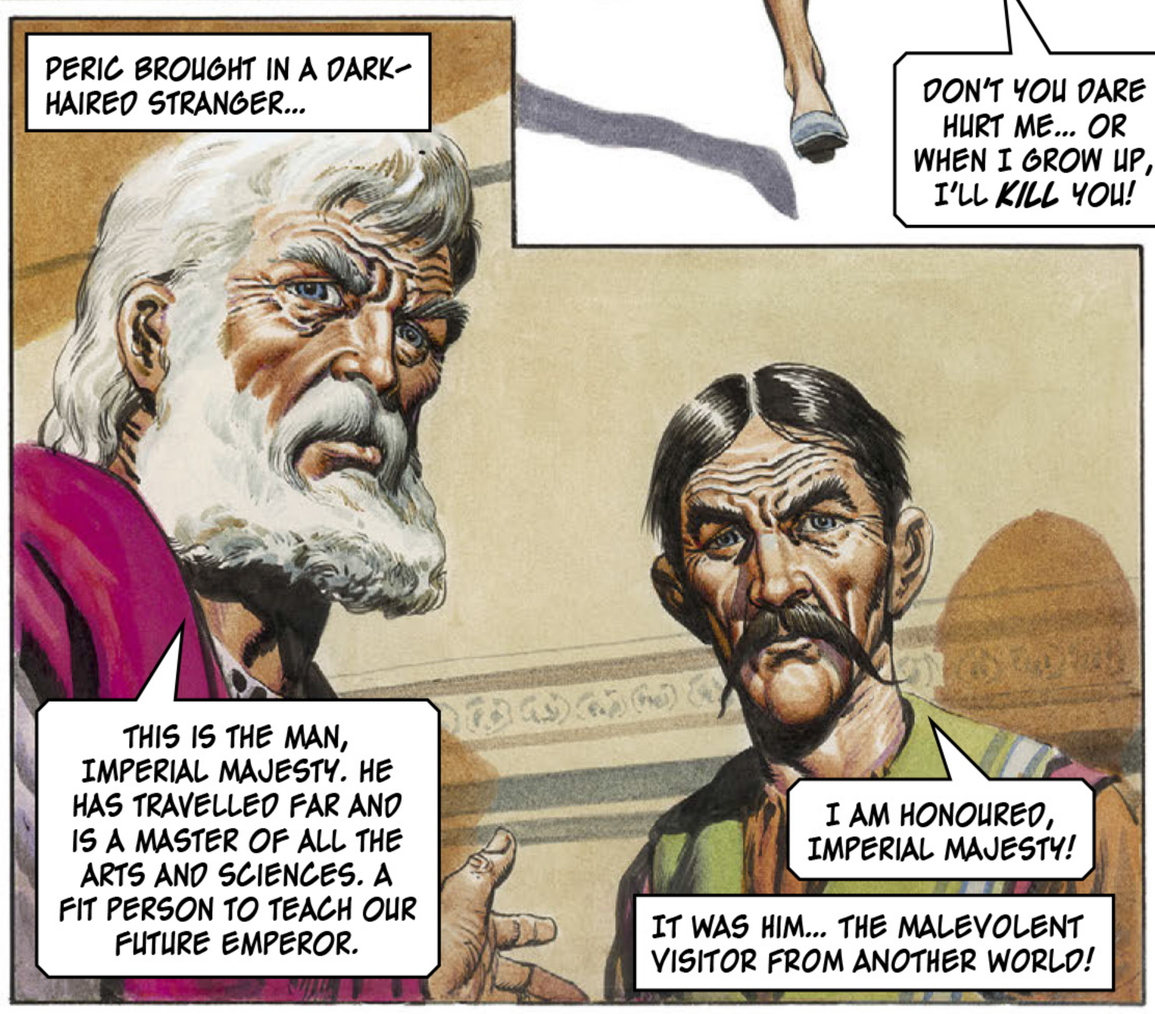
THE WRETCHED HUNTER BABBLED... EVERYTHING.
THIS IS THE PLAIN OF VORG... PART OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, RULED BY THE EMPEROR TRIGO... HE HAS ONE SON, A CHILD CALLED PRINCE ARGO...


SOME MONTHS LATER, IN HIS PALACE IN TRIGAN CITY, THE EMPEROR WAS BUSY WITH AFFAIRS OF STATE...

SUDDENLY, A PEBBLE STUNG THE EMPEROR AGONISINGLY AT THE BACK OF HIS NECK!
AAAAGH!... BY ALL THE STARS!

ARGO, YOU YOUNG DEMON! I'LL HAVE THE HIDE OFF YOU!
DON'T YOU DARE HURT ME... OR WHEN I GROW UP, I'LL KILL YOU!

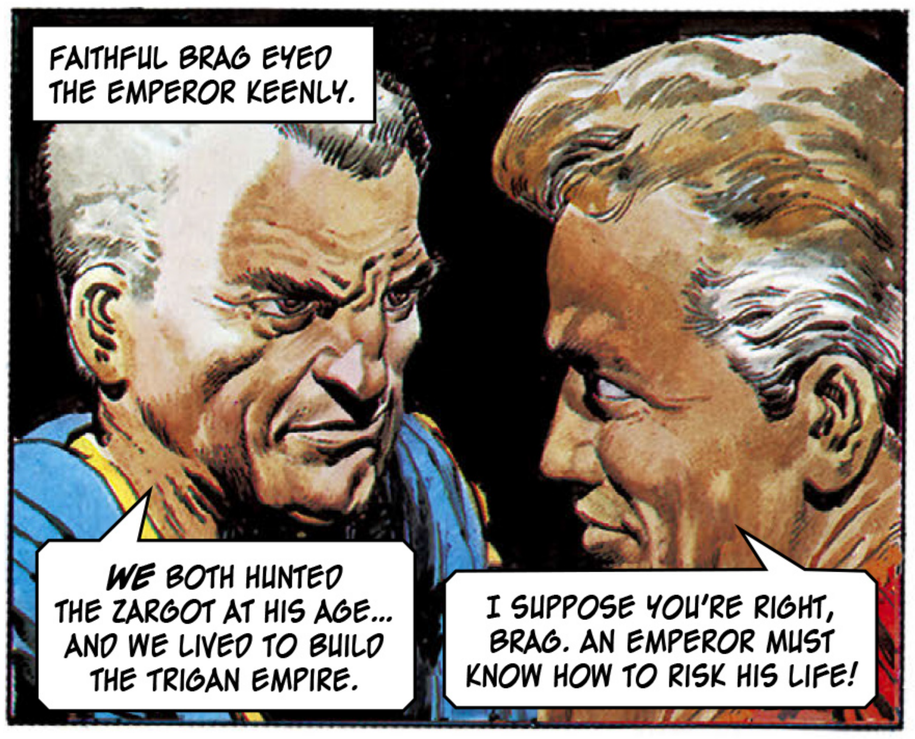

LATER THAT DAY, TRIGO SUMMONED HIS FRIEND, PERIC, THE WISEST MAN ON ELEKTON...
I CAN DO NOTHING WITH THE LAD. HE'S COMPLETELY INCORRIGIBLE. I NEED YOUR ADVICE, PERIC.
PRINCE ARGO IS HIGH-SPIRITED AND NEEDS TO COMMENCE HIS EDUCATION AS THE FUTURE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS. I SUGGEST A TUTOR... AND I HAVE SUCH A MAN IN MIND...

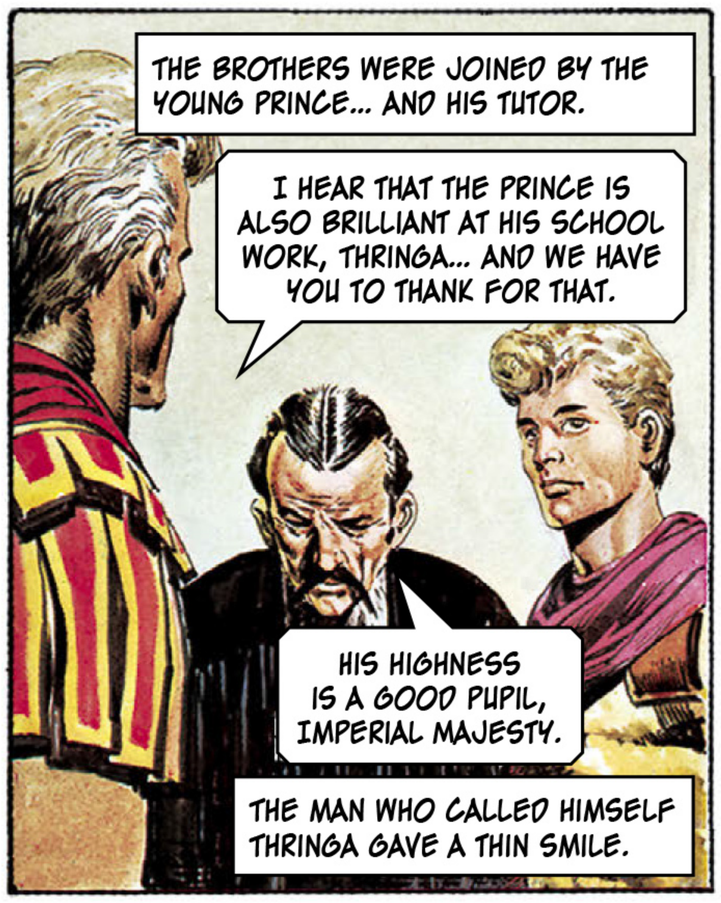

PERIC BROUGHT IN A DARK-HAIRED STRANGER...
THIS IS THE MAN, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. HE HAS TRAVELLED FAR AND IS A MASTER OF ALL THE ARTS AND SCIENCES. A FIT PERSON TO TEACH OUR FUTURE EMPEROR.
I AM HONOURED, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
IT WAS HIM... THE MALEVOLENT VISITOR FROM ANOTHER WORLD!

TEN YEARS PASSED...
ONE DAY, THE THUNDER OF POUNDING HOOVES RESOUNDED IN THE ARENA AT TRIGAN CITY... AND A WHOOPING BOY RODE HIS KREED STRAIGHT AT A REARING ZARGOT.

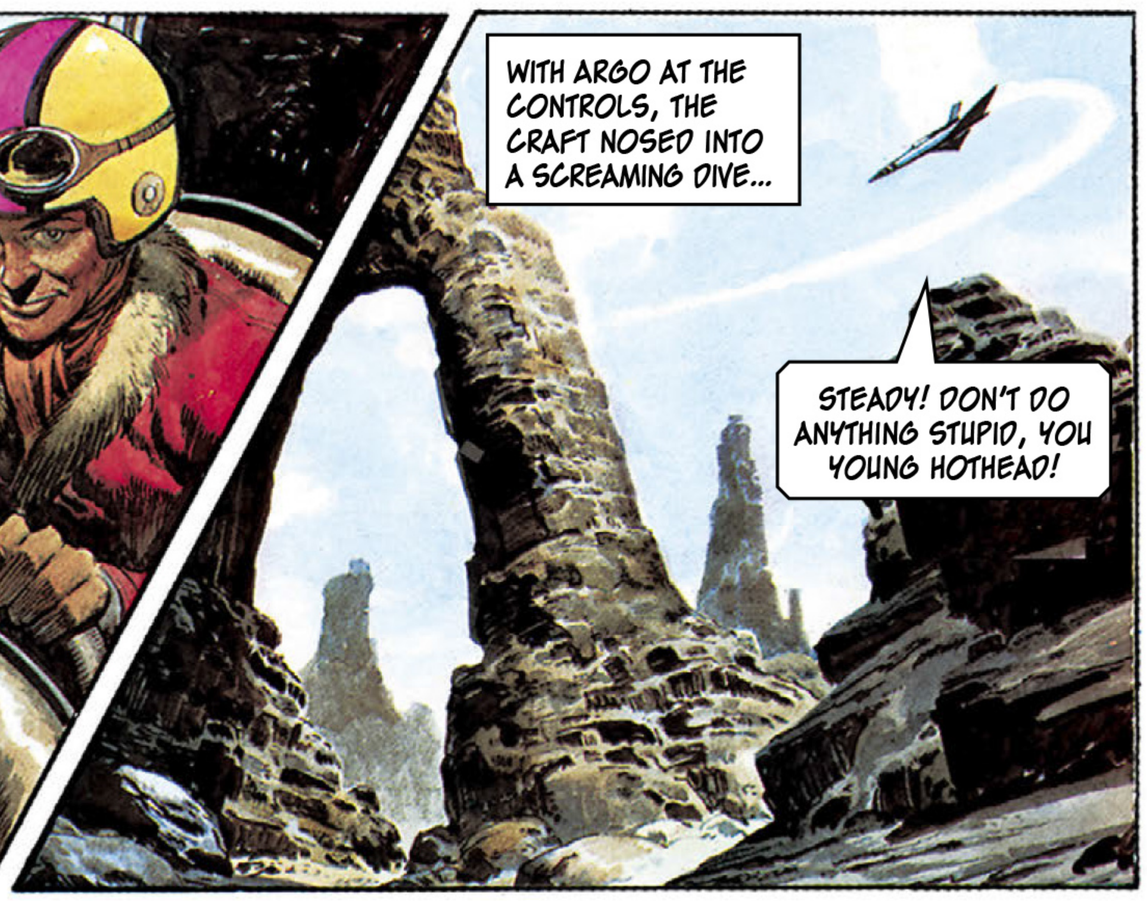
DUCKING THE SWEEP OF THE SHARP TALONS, THE BOY DROVE HIS HUNTING SPEAR FORWARD... AND THE GREAT BEAST FELL.

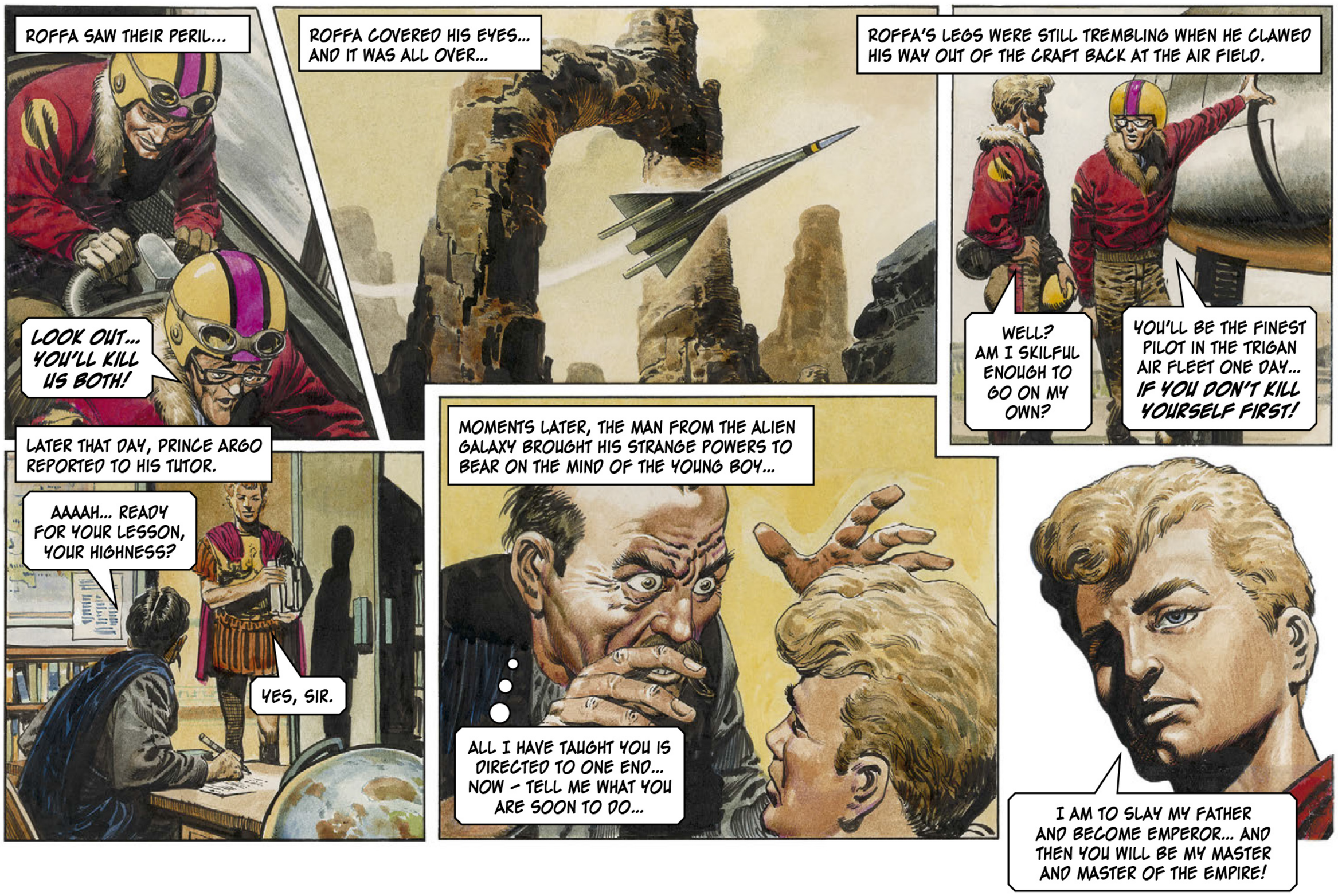
BRAG HAD WATCHED THE THRILLING ENCOUNTER. HE TURNED WITH A START AS HIS BROTHER TRIGO APPEARED.
HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES... ALLOWING THE HEIR TO THE IMPERIAL THRONE TO RISK HIS LIFE LIKE THAT?


FAITHFUL BRAG EYED THE EMPEROR KEENLY.
WE BOTH HUNTED THE ZARGOT AT HIS AGE... AND WE LIVED TO BUILD THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT, BRAG. AN EMPEROR MUST KNOW HOW TO RISK HIS LIFE!

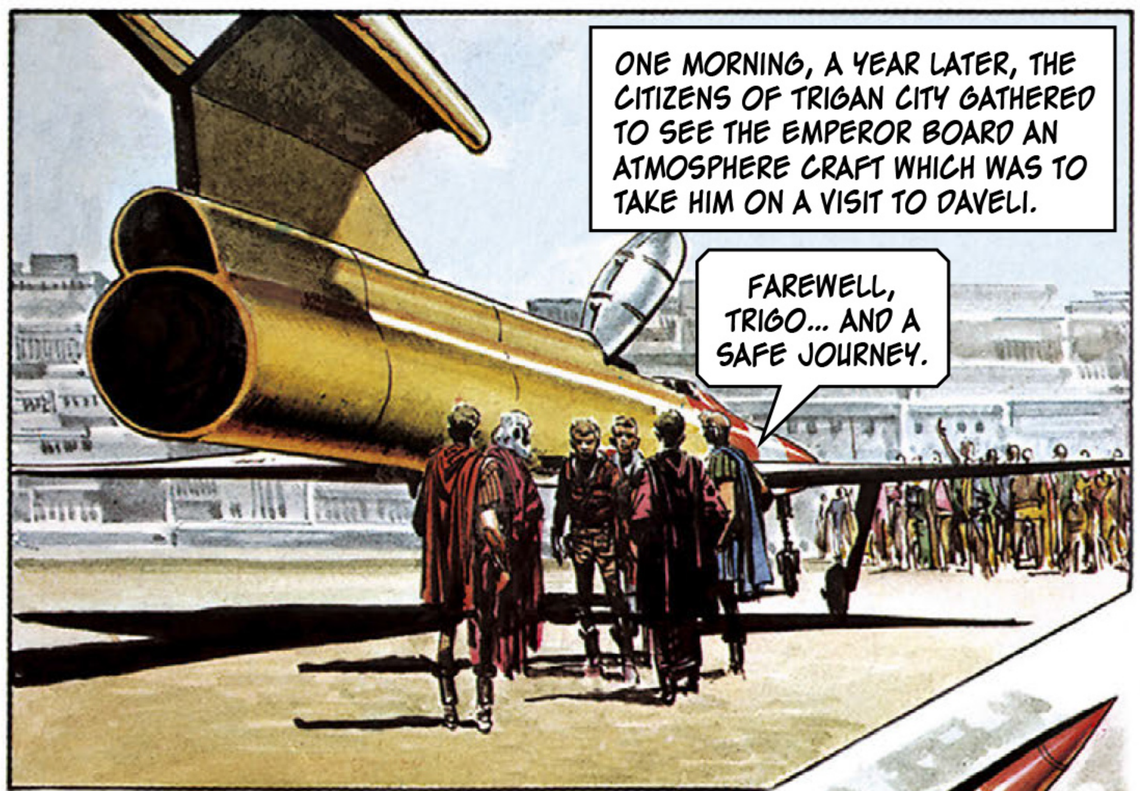

THE BROTHERS WERE JOINED BY THE YOUNG PRINCE... AND HIS TUTOR.
I HEAR THAT THE PRINCE IS ALSO BRILLIANT AT HIS SCHOOL WORK, THRINGA... AND WE HAVE YOU TO THANK FOR THAT.
HIS HIGHNESS IS A GOOD PUPIL, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
THE MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF THRINGA GAVE A THIN SMILE.

THIS, THEN, WAS THE PATTERN OF THE YOUNG PRINCE'S LIFE... LESSONS IN THE WARLIKE ARTS FROM HIS UNCLE, SCHOOL WORK FROM THRINGA AND ROFFA TAUGHT HIM TO FLY...
TAKE OVER... SHE'S ALL YOURS!

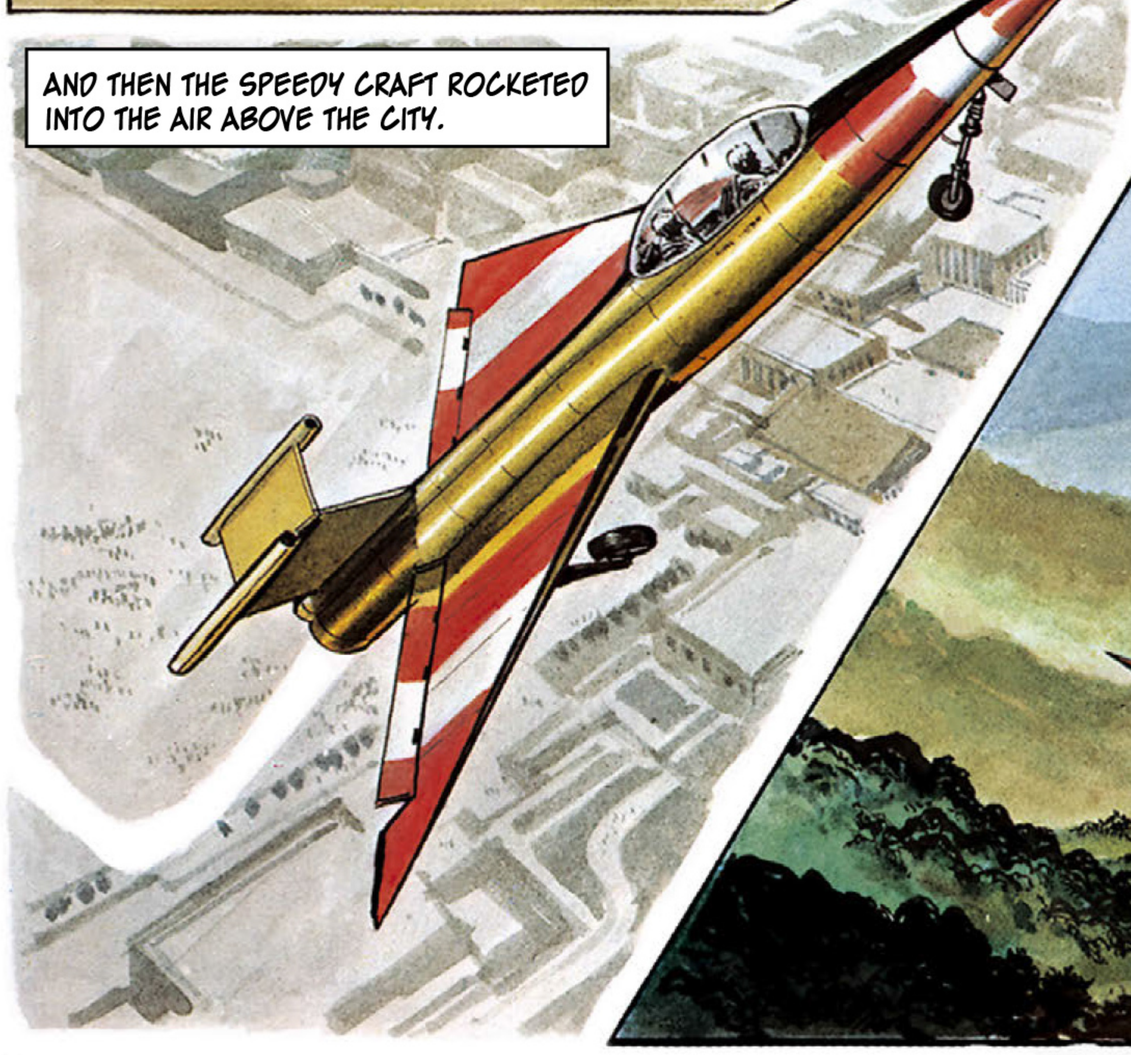

WITH ARGO AT THE CONTROLS, THE CRAFT NOSED INTO A SCREAMING DIVE...
STEADY! DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID, YOU YOUNG HOTHEAD!


ROFFA SAW THEIR PERIL...
LOOK OUT... YOU'LL KILL US BOTH!
ROFFA COVERED HIS EYES... AND IT WAS ALL OVER...
ROFFA'S LEGS WERE STILL TREMBLING WHEN HE CLAWED HIS WAY OUT OF THE CRAFT BACK AT THE AIR FIELD.
WELL? AM I SKILFUL ENOUGH TO GO ON MY OWN?
YOU'LL BE THE FINEST PILOT IN THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET ONE DAY... IF YOU DON'T KILL YOURSELF FIRST!
LATER THAT DAY, PRINCE ARGO REPORTED TO HIS TUTOR.
AAAAH... READY FOR YOUR LESSON, YOUR HIGHNESS?
YES, SIR.
MOMENTS LATER, THE MAN FROM THE ALIEN GALAXY BROUGHT HIS STRANGE POWERS TO BEAR ON THE MIND OF THE YOUNG BOY...
ALL I HAVE TAUGHT YOU IS DIRECTED TO ONE END... NOW – TELL ME WHAT YOU ARE SOON TO DO...
I AM TO SLAY MY FATHER AND BECOME EMPEROR... AND THEN YOU WILL BE MY MASTER AND MASTER OF THE EMPIRE!

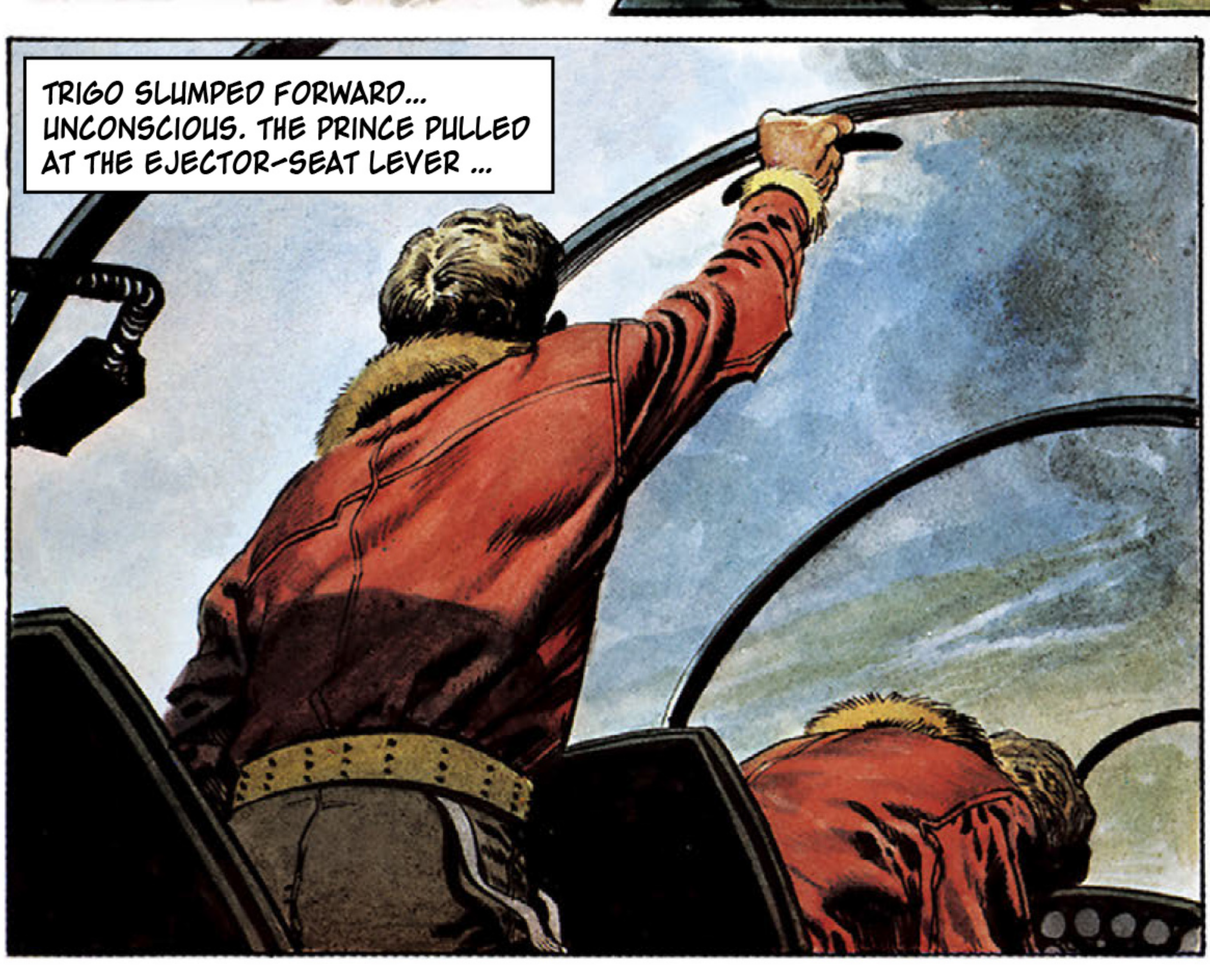
DL


ONE MORNING, A YEAR LATER, THE CITIZENS OF TRIGAN CITY GATHERED TO SEE THE EMPEROR BOARD AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WHICH WAS TO TAKE HIM ON A VISIT TO DAVELI.
FAREWELL, TRIGO... AND A SAFE JOURNEY.

TRIGO SMILED AT HIS EAGER-EYED SON.
I SHALL BE IN GOOD HANDS. THEY TELL ME THAT ARGO IS THE FINEST PILOT IN THE AIR FLEET!
THE LAST PERSON TO WHOM ARGO SAID FAREWELL WAS HIS TUTOR...
YOU KNOW WHAT HAS TO BE DONE!
YES!

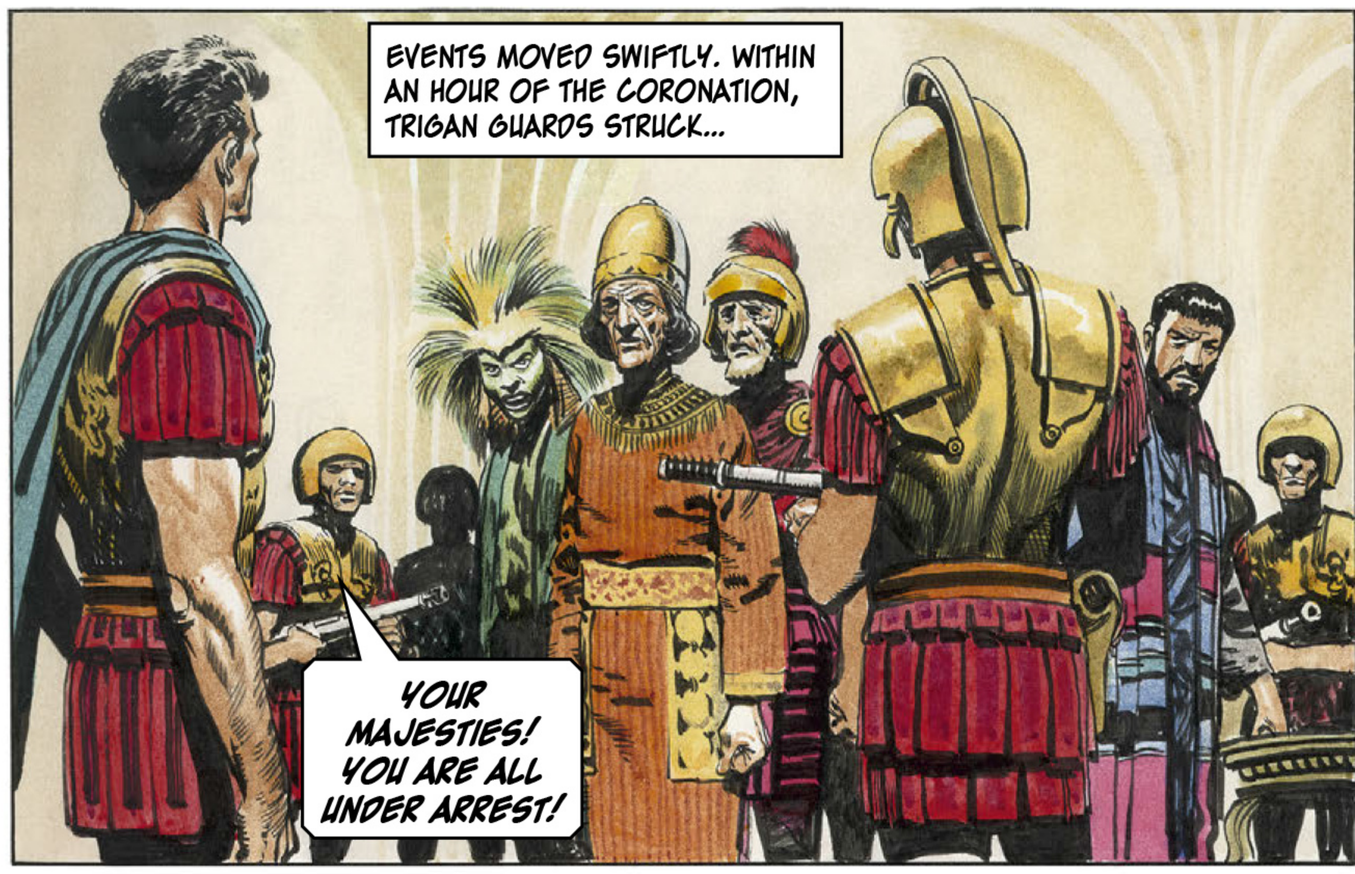

AND THEN THE SPEEDY CRAFT ROCKETED INTO THE AIR ABOVE THE CITY.

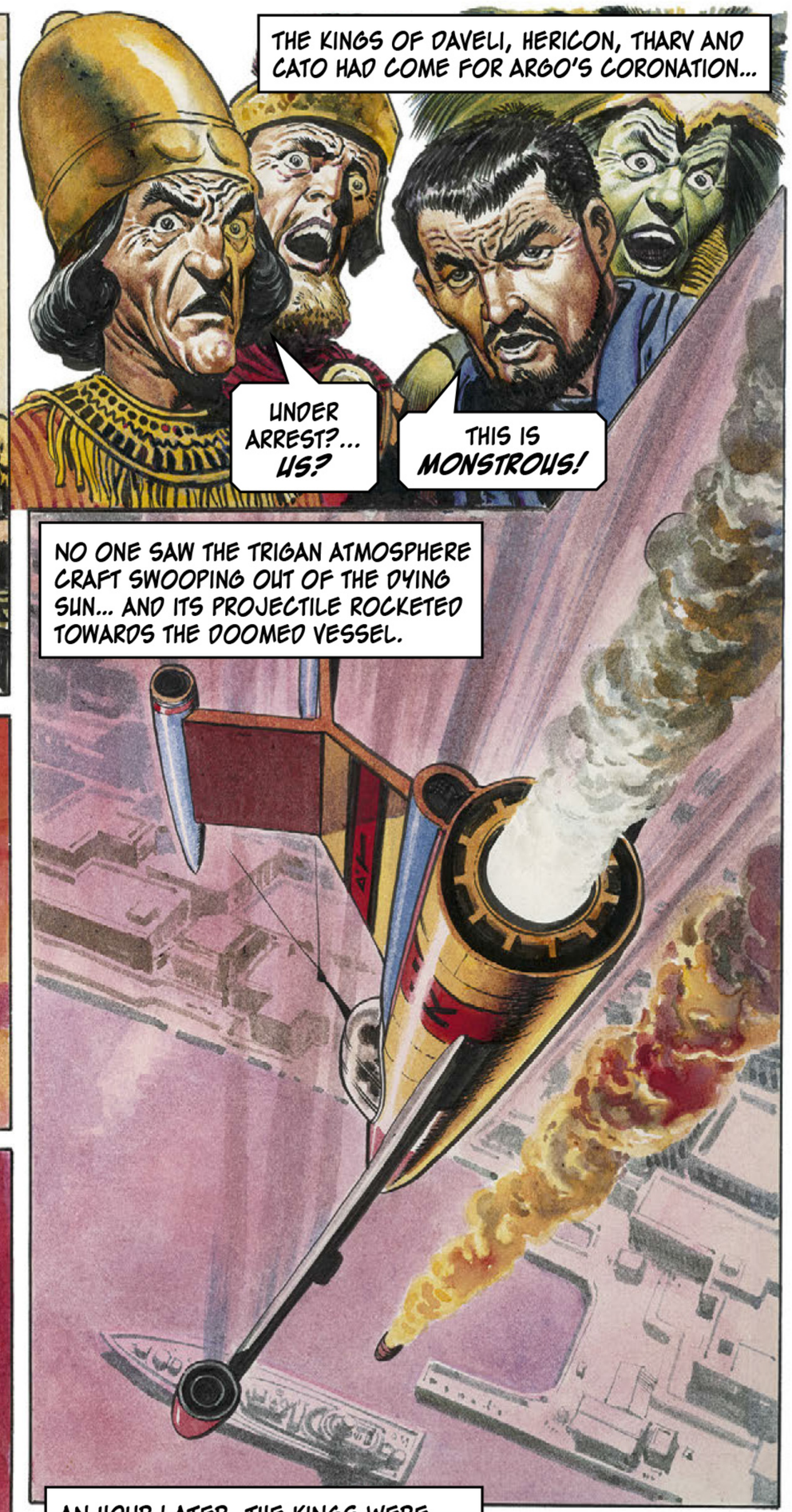
LATER... MUCH LATER... AND HIGH ABOVE THE DENSE JUNGLE OF DAVELI.
FAREWELL, MY BELOVED FATHER... GO TO YOUR LONG, LAST SLEEP!

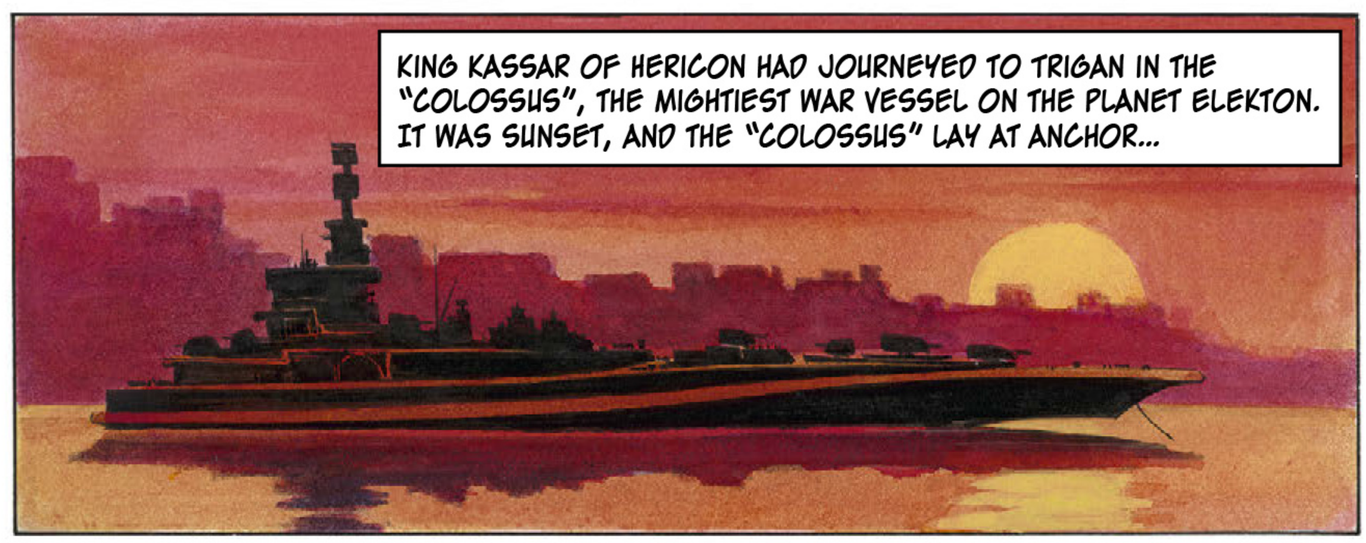

TRIGO SLUMPED FORWARD... UNCONSCIOUS. THE PRINCE PULLED AT THE EJECTOR-SEAT LEVER ...

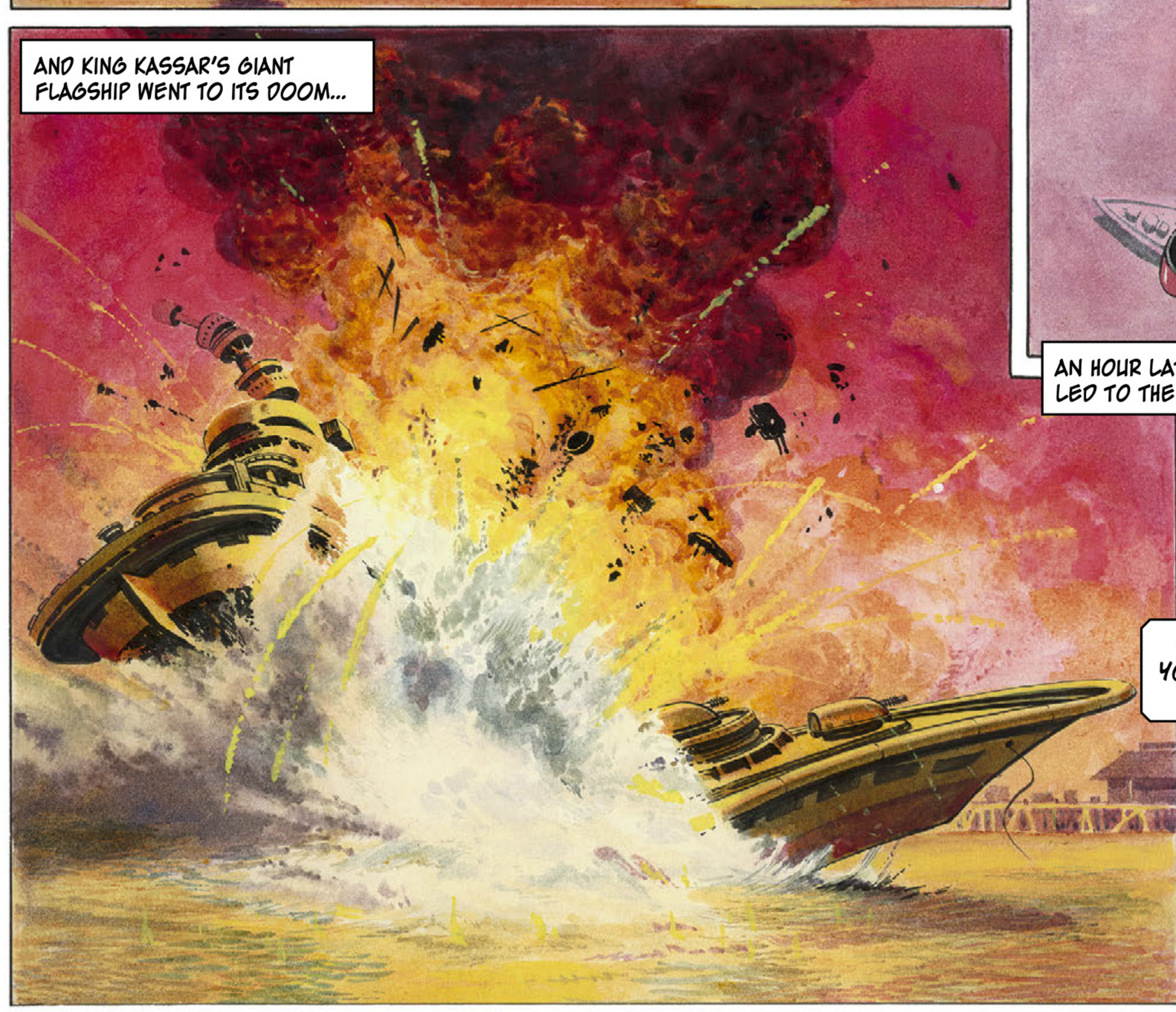
AND WAS SHOT FROM THE DOOMED CRAFT...

...WHICH PLUNGED INTO THE JUNGLE AND EXPLODED IN A FIREBALL!
THERE WAS ONLY MOCKING TRIUMPH IN ARGO'S EYES AS HE GAZED DOWN AT HIS FATHER'S END.
THE EJECTOR-SEAT BROUGHT HIM DOWN NEAR THE EDGE OF THE JUNGLE, WHERE HE WAS FOUND BY A PARTY OF VORG HUNTERS.
ESCORT ME TO TRIGAN CITY!
FAITHFUL BRAG'S GREAT HEART NEARLY BROKE WHEN THE TRAGIC NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO HIM BY OLD PERIC.
TRIGO... OH WHY COULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN ME? I WOULD GLADLY HAVE PERISHED IN YOUR PLACE!
YOU MUST BE STRONG, BRAG... AND THANK THE STARS THAT ARGO SURVIVED THE CRASH.
WHEN THE FIRST SHOCK OF GRIEF HAD PASSED, HE WENT TO HIS NEPHEW...
POOR LAD... THESE ARE YOUNG SHOULDERS TO HAVE TO BEAR THE GREAT WEIGHT OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
I WILL TRY TO BEAR THAT WEIGHT... FOR THE SAKE OF MY PEOPLE.
A FEW DAYS LATER, THE CAPTAINS OF THE EMPIRE WATCHED THEIR BOY-EMPEROR CROWN HIMSELF.
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR ARGO!
THRINGA LOOKED ON, EVILLY...
NOW I AM THE MASTER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE... TOMORROW OF ALL THE PLANET ELEKTON!


EVENTS MOVED SWIFTLY. WITHIN AN HOUR OF THE CORONATION, TRIGAN GUARDS STRUCK...
YOUR MAJESTIES! YOU ARE ALL UNDER ARREST!


THE KINGS OF DAVELI, HERICON, THARV AND CATO HAD COME FOR ARGO'S CORONATION...
UNDER ARREST?... US?
THIS IS MONSTROUS!
NO ONE SAW THE TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SWOOPING OUT OF THE DYING SUN... AND ITS PROJECTILE ROCKETED TOWARDS THE DOOMED VESSEL.


KING KASSAR OF HERICON HAD JOURNEYED TO TRIGAN IN THE "COLOSSUS", THE MIGHTIEST WAR VESSEL ON THE PLANET ELEKTON. IT WAS SUNSET, AND THE "COLOSSUS" LAY AT ANCHOR...

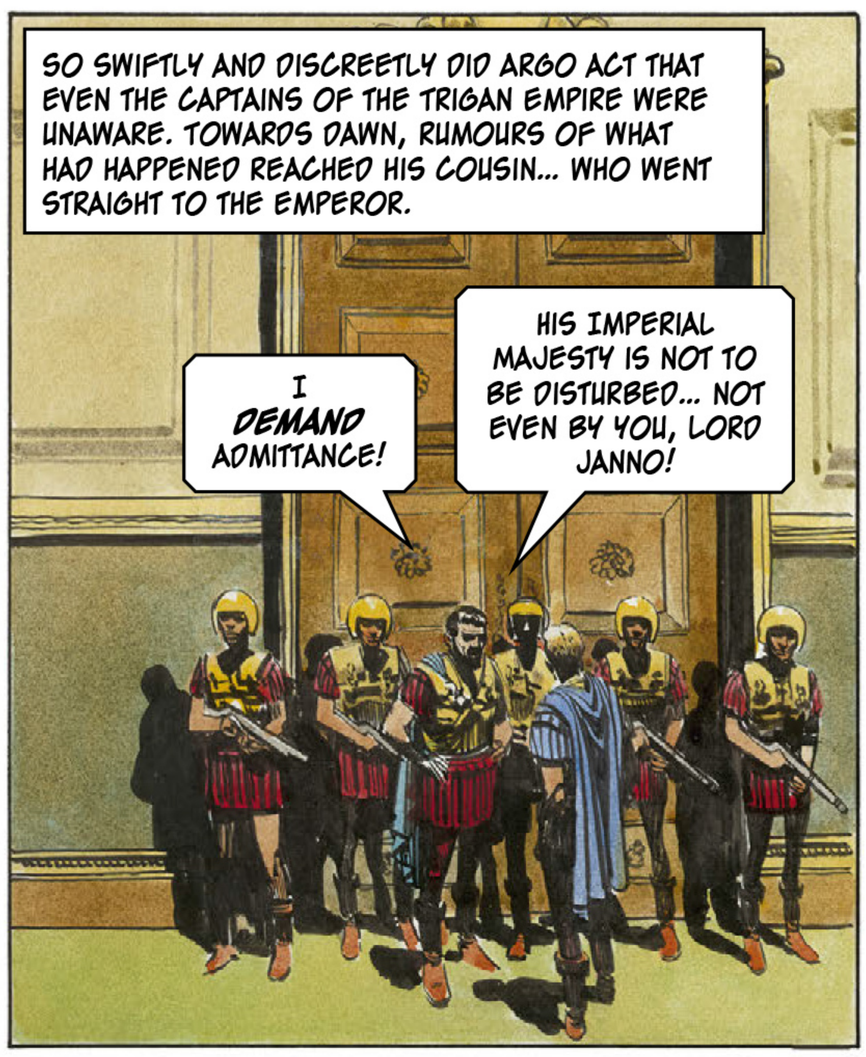

AND KING KASSAR'S GIANT FLAGSHIP WENT TO ITS DOOM...

AN HOUR LATER, THE KINGS WERE LED TO THE NEW TRIGAN EMPEROR...
BY ALL THE STARS, YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS, YOU MONSTER...
SILENCE!

KASSAR OF HERICON WAS NOT A MAN TO BE INTIMIDATED.
THESE FOUR DOCUMENTS HAND OVER THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE LANDS OF DAVELI, CATO, HERICON AND THARV TO ME! YOU FOUR WILL SIGN... IMMEDIATELY!

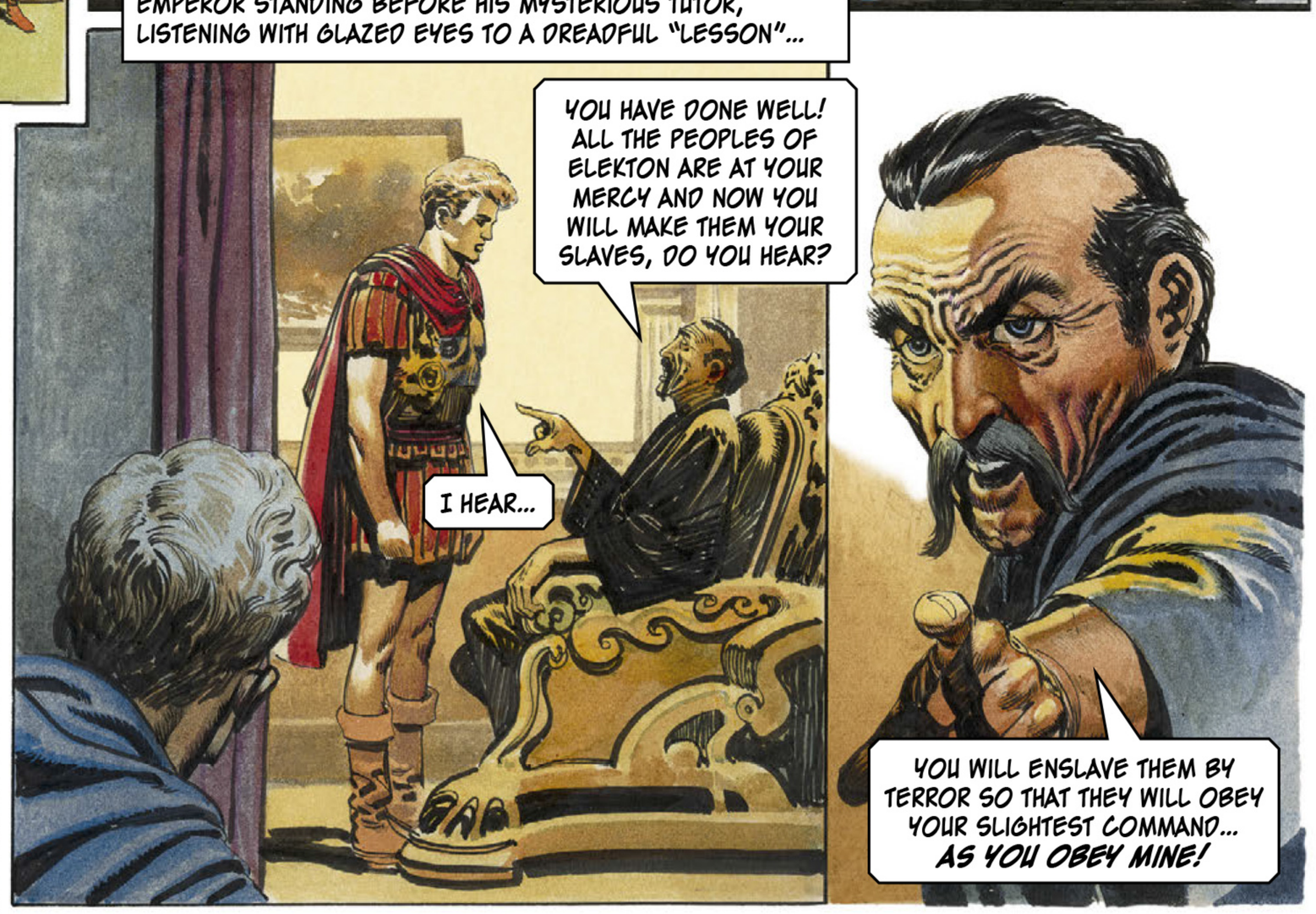
YOU MAD YOUNG FOOL! DO YOU THINK I WOULD BIND MY PEOPLE INTO SLAVERY? I WOULD RATHER DIE!
YOUR WISH IS EASILY GRANTED. THE EXECUTIONER AWAITS IN THE COURTYARD BELOW... TAKE HIM AWAY!

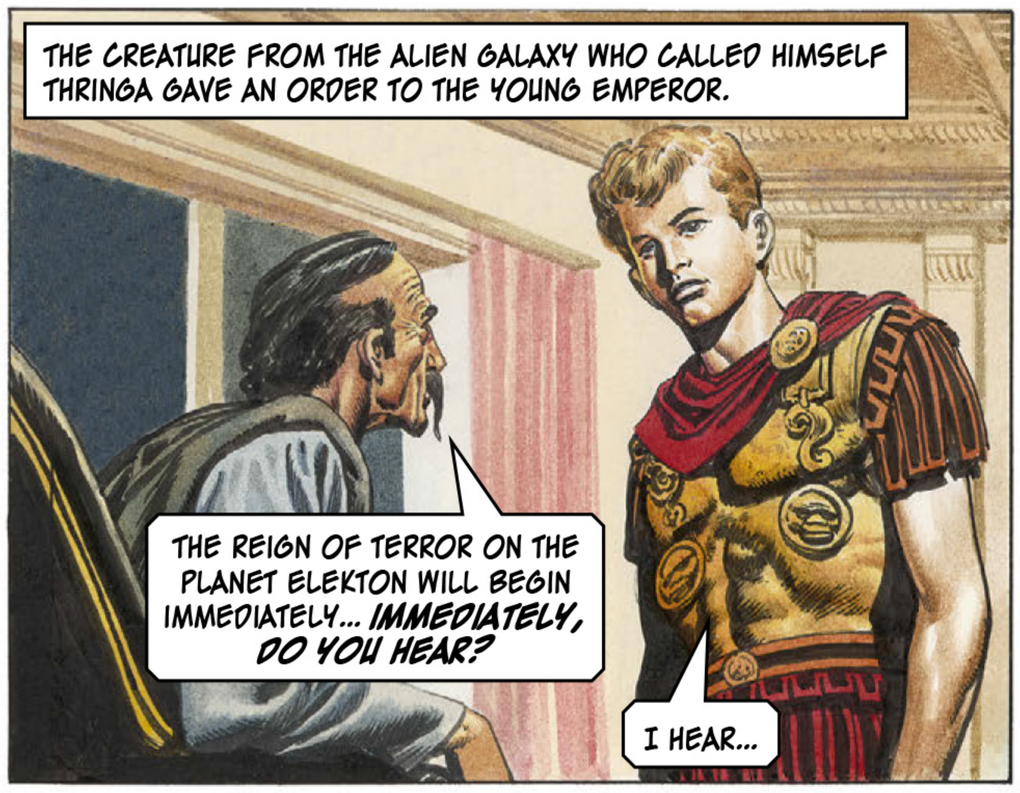
KASSAR WAS DRAGGED OUT... AND ARGO STARED COLDLY AT THE SHOCKED FACES OF THE REMAINING KINGS.
SIGN!


SO SWIFTLY AND DISCREETLY DID ARGO ACT THAT EVEN THE CAPTAINS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WERE UNAWARE. TOWARDS DAWN, RUMOURS OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED REACHED HIS COUSIN... WHO WENT STRAIGHT TO THE EMPEROR.
I DEMAND ADMITTANCE!
HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS NOT TO BE DISTURBED... NOT EVEN BY YOU, LORD JANNO!

JANNO STRODE OUT INTO THE PALACE GARDENS. HIGH ABOVE HIM, THE LIGHTS FROM THE IMPERIAL APARTMENTS TWINKLED IN THE DAWN.
THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY IN!

CLAWING HIS WAY UP THE STEEP FACE OF THE BALCONY, HE HEARD VOICES...
HE'S GOT THRINGA WITH HIM...


JANNO SAW EVERYTHING... HE SAW THE NEWLY-CROWNED EMPEROR STANDING BEFORE HIS MYSTERIOUS TUTOR, LISTENING WITH GLAZED EYES TO A DREADFUL "LESSON"...
YOU HAVE DONE WELL! ALL THE PEOPLES OF ELEKTON ARE AT YOUR MERCY AND NOW YOU WILL MAKE THEM YOUR SLAVES, DO YOU HEAR?
I HEAR...
YOU WILL ENSLAVE THEM BY TERROR SO THAT THEY WILL OBEY YOUR SLIGHTEST COMMAND... AS YOU OBEY MINE!


THE CREATURE FROM THE ALIEN GALAXY WHO CALLED HIMSELF THRINGA GAVE AN ORDER TO THE YOUNG EMPEROR.
THE REIGN OF TERROR ON THE PLANET ELEKTON WILL BEGIN IMMEDIATELY... IMMEDIATELY, DO YOU HEAR?
I HEAR...

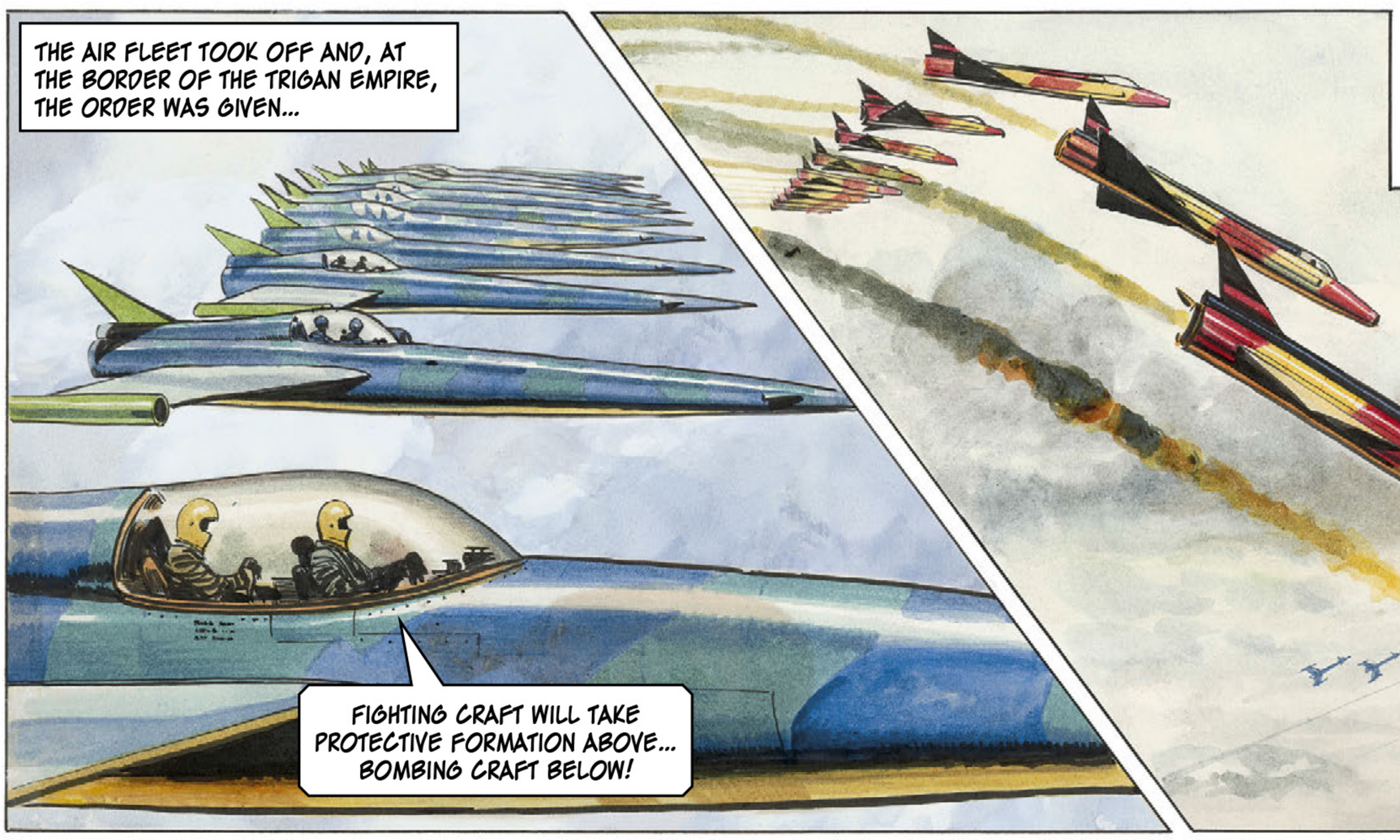
JANNO LISTENED, WIDE-EYED WITH SHOCK, FROM OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER.
THIS IS FANTASTIC... UNBELIEVABLE! I MUST TELL MY FATHER OF THIS MADNESS!

JANNO BURST INTO HIS FATHER'S SLEEPING CHAMBER. STOLID BRAG HAD SLEPT HEAVILY THROUGH THE WILD EVENTS OF THE NIGHT...
IT CAN'T BE TRUE!
FATHER, I TELL YOU IT IS TRUE!

KING KASSAR HAS BEEN EXECUTED LIKE A COMMON CRIMINAL... HIS FLAGSHIP BLOWN TO PIECES WITHOUT WARNING! THE KINGDOMS OF HERICON, DAVELI, THARV AND CATO GIVEN INTO THE HANDS OF ARGO... AND ARGO UNDER THE CONTROL OF THAT WRETCH!

THE ASTOUNDING NEWS SPREAD LIKE A FIRE ACROSS THE FACE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON. IT REACHED THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE HERICON AIR FLEET BY MID-MORNING.
OUR KING HAS BEEN SLAIN AND THE TRIGAN EMPEROR CLAIMS US AS HIS SUBJECTS AND SLAVES... THE TRIGANS WILL BE HERE ANY HOUR!
WE'LL NEVER BOW TO THE ACCURSED TRIGANS!

THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF THE HERICON AIR FLEET WAS FAMED THROUGHOUT ELEKTON AND SOON...
VENGEANCE FOR KING KASSAR!
WE'LL BLOW TRIGAN CITY TO THE SKIES!


THE AIR FLEET TOOK OFF AND, AT THE BORDER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, THE ORDER WAS GIVEN...
FIGHTING CRAFT WILL TAKE PROTECTIVE FORMATION ABOVE... BOMBING CRAFT BELOW!

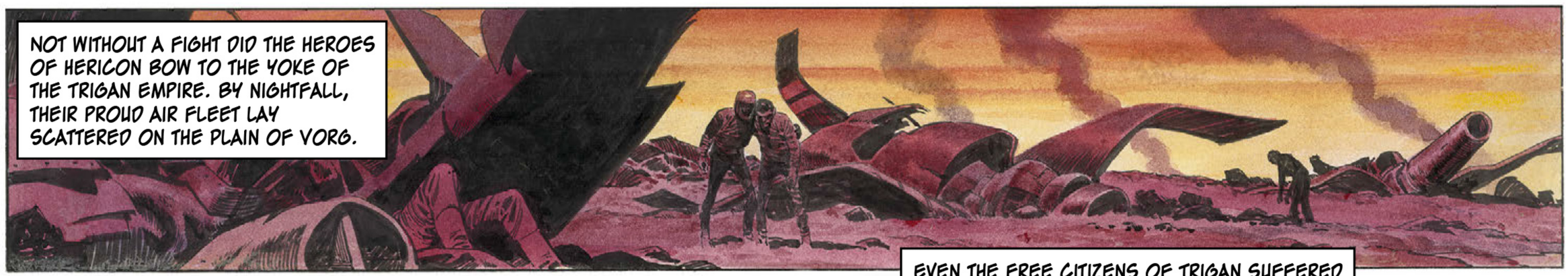
AND THEN... FAR ABOVE... A BATTLE SQUADRON OF TRIGAN FIGHTERS!

AT THE CONTROLS OF THE LEADING CRAFT WAS TRIGAN'S FINEST PILOT... ***THE EMPEROR ARGO HIMSELF!***

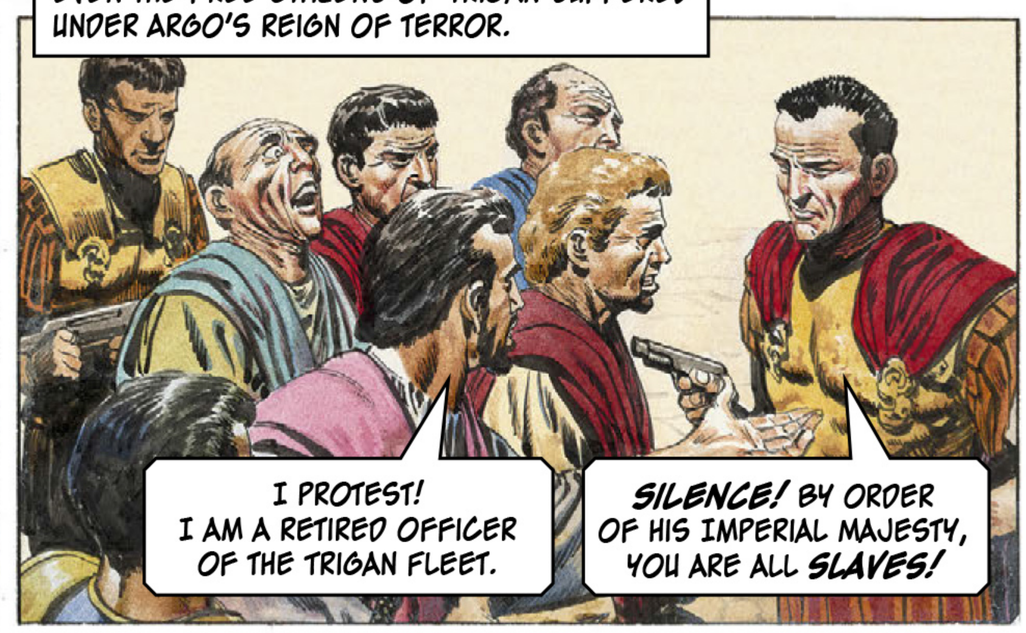
ATTACK! ATTACK! ATTACK!

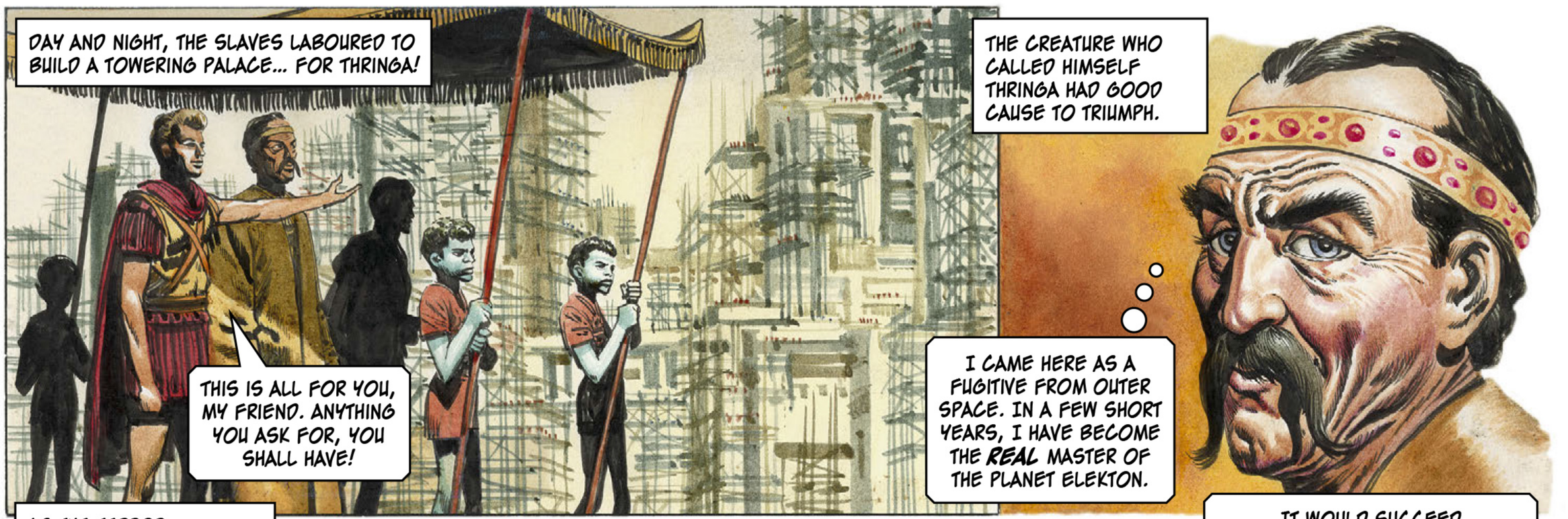
ARGO LED IN THAT BREATH-ROBBING SWOOP OF DESTRUCTION... AND HIS CANNONS RAKED THE LEADING LINE OF HERICONS.

THEN FOLLOWED A BATTLE-ROYAL!


NOT WITHOUT A FIGHT DID THE HEROES OF HERICON BOW TO THE YOKE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. BY NIGHTFALL, THEIR PROUD AIR FLEET LAY SCATTERED ON THE PLAIN OF VORG.

THE SURVIVORS OF THE BATTLE WERE LED OFF TO TRIGAN... AND A LIFETIME OF SLAVERY.


EVEN THE FREE CITIZENS OF TRIGAN SUFFERED UNDER ARGO'S REIGN OF TERROR.
I PROTEST! I AM A RETIRED OFFICER OF THE TRIGAN FLEET.
SILENCE! BY ORDER OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, YOU ARE ALL SLAVES!


DAY AND NIGHT, THE SLAVES LABOURED TO BUILD A TOWERING PALACE... FOR THRINGA!
THIS IS ALL FOR YOU, MY FRIEND. ANYTHING YOU ASK FOR, YOU SHALL HAVE!
THE CREATURE WHO CALLED HIMSELF THRINGA HAD GOOD CAUSE TO TRIUMPH.
I CAME HERE AS A FUGITIVE FROM OUTER SPACE. IN A FEW SHORT YEARS, I HAVE BECOME THE REAL MASTER OF THE PLANET ELEKTON.

AS THE TERROR INCREASED, MANY BRAVE MEN PLOTTED TO OVERTHROW THE TYRANT AND HIS CREATURE. THE THREE COMRADES JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA CALLED ON OLD PERIC...
PERIC, WE'VE GOT TO FIGHT!
AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO GO ABOUT IT, MIGHT ONE ASK?

WE COULD START A MUTINY IN THE ARMED FORCES... OVERTHROW ARGO AND DECLARE A REPUBLIC!
IT'S A DESPERATE PLAN, BUT IT MIGHT SUCCEED!

IT WOULD SUCCEED ONLY IN GETTING THE THREE OF YOU EXECUTED! IF ARGO WOULD KILL HIS OWN FATHER TO GAIN THE IMPERIAL CROWN, DO YOU THINK HE WOULD HESITATE TO TRAMPLE YOU UNDERFOOT?
PERIC! DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT HE KILLED MY UNCLE TRIGO?

I DO! I BELIEVE HE IS COMPLETELY UNDER THRINGA'S EVIL INFLUENCE AND NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS ACTIONS! MY ADVICE TO YOU IS TO DO NOTHING TILL A SUITABLE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF.

LATER THAT DAY, PERIC'S DAUGHTER SALVIA WENT INTO THE MARKET PLACE TO BUY PROVISIONS.

ARGO'S GUARDS ARE EVERY-WHERE!

NO! IT CAN'T BE... BUT... IT IS!

A NORD WOMAN – ONE OF THE NOMADS OF VORG – WAS SELLING PRODUCE AT A MARKET STALL, ASSISTED BY TWO YOUTHS WHO APPEARED TO BE TWINS.

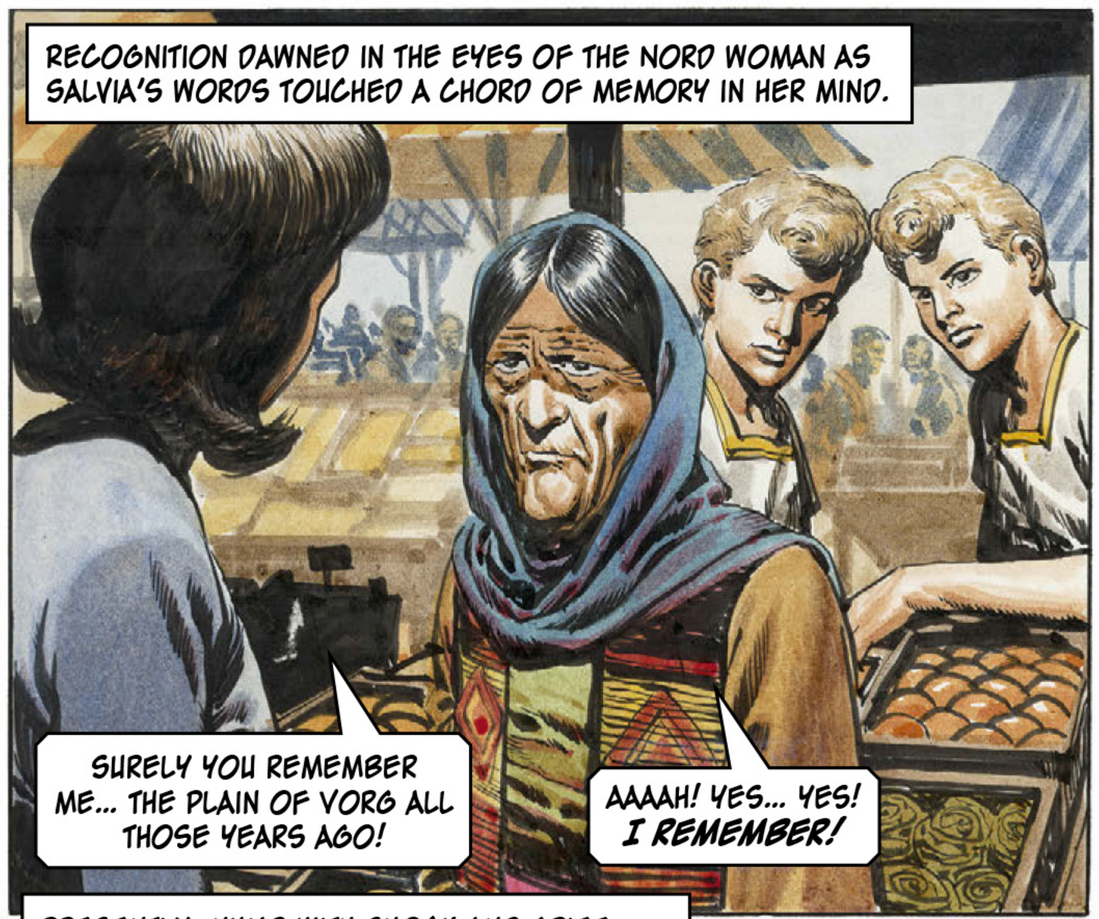
BUY MY FRUIT... VERY CHEAP!

THE EMPEROR'S BROTHERS!

SALVIA'S MIND WENT BACK THROUGH THE YEARS... TO THE DAY SHE HAD GONE INTO THE PLAIN OF VORG TO ABANDON TWO OF TRIGO'S TRIPLET SONS...

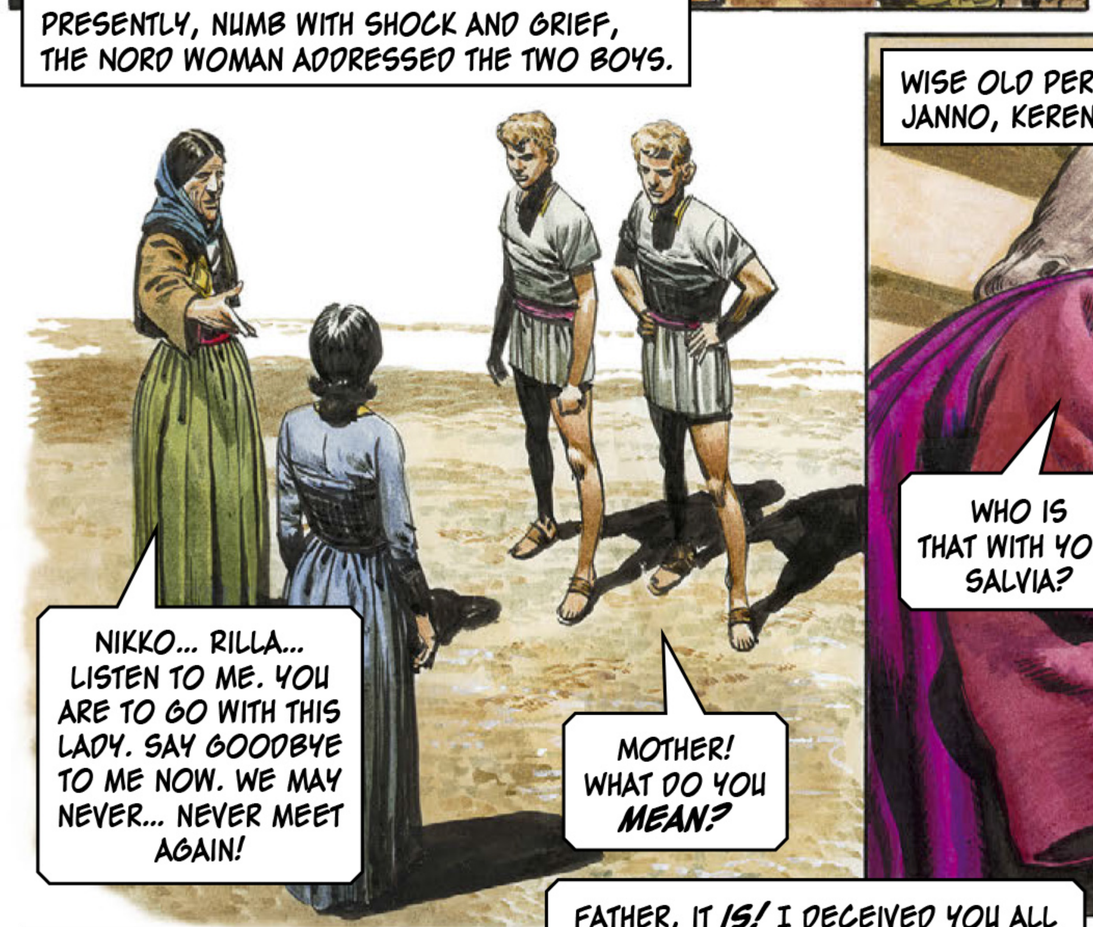
IT'S *UNBELIEVABLE!*

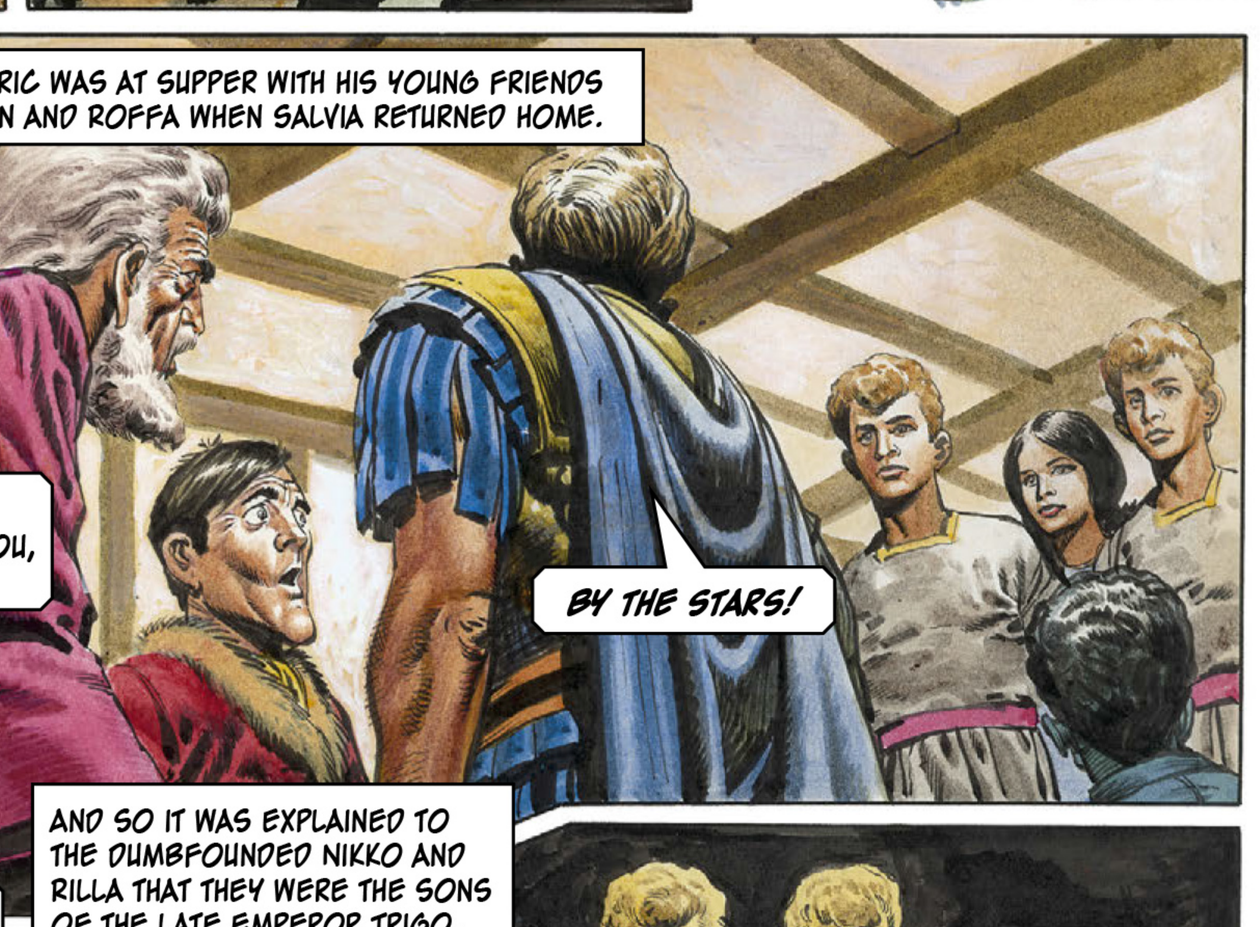
WHAT AILS YOU, LADY? WHY ARE YOU STARING AT MY LADS IN THAT MANNER?

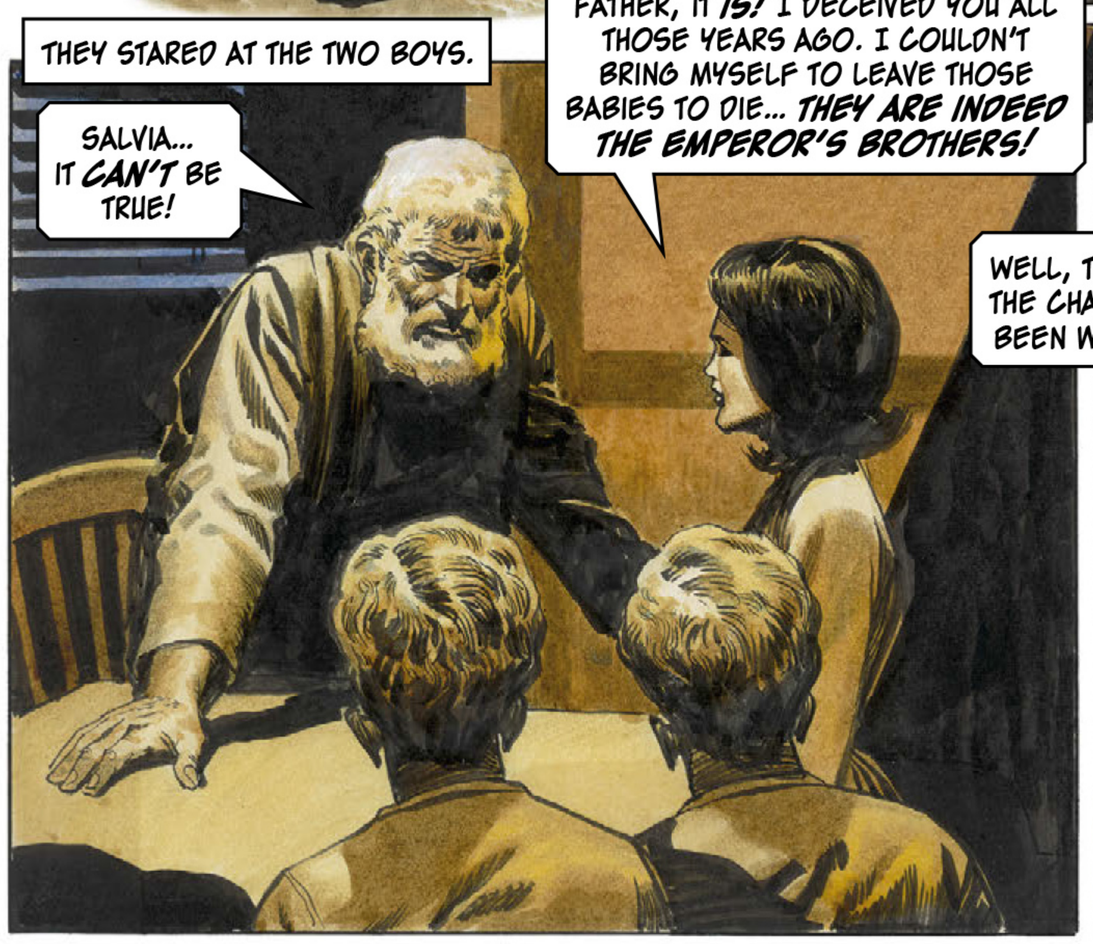

RECOGNITION DAWNED IN THE EYES OF THE NORD WOMAN AS SALVIA'S WORDS TOUCHED A CHORD OF MEMORY IN HER MIND.
SURELY YOU REMEMBER ME... THE PLAIN OF VORG ALL THOSE YEARS AGO!
AAAAH! YES... YES! I REMEMBER!

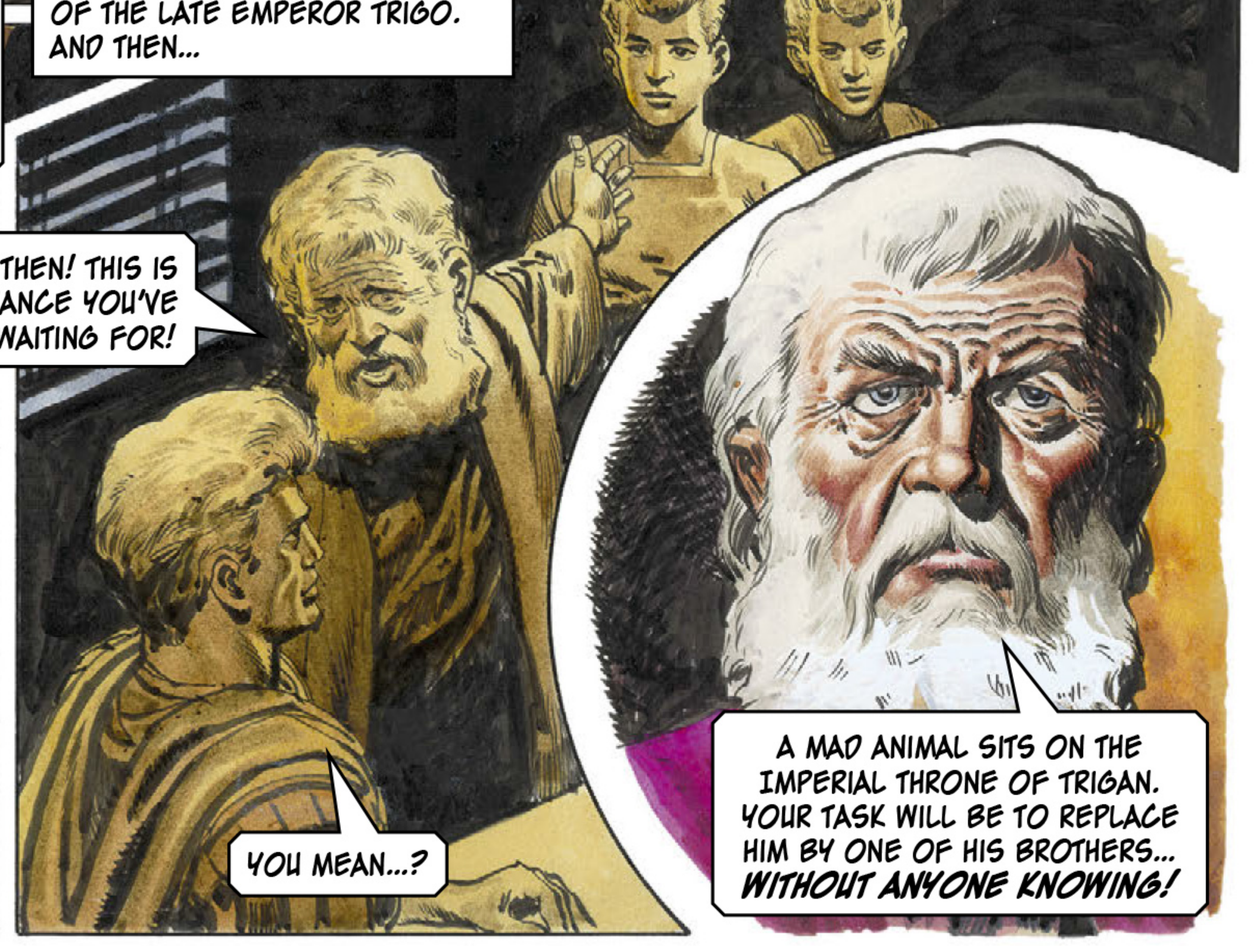
WITH AN ANGUISHED GLANCE AT THE TWO BOYS, SHE TOOK SALVIA ASIDE.
LADY... I IMPLORE YOU... NOT A WORD TO THE LADS! I HAVE BROUGHT THEM UP AS MY OWN AND THEY BELIEVE I AM THEIR MOTHER!
OH, YOU POOR WOMAN...

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A SHOCK. THEY ARE NO ORDINARY LADS... THEY ARE THE SONS OF...


PRESENTLY, NUMB WITH SHOCK AND GRIEF, THE NORD WOMAN ADDRESSED THE TWO BOYS.
NIKKO... RILLA... LISTEN TO ME. YOU ARE TO GO WITH THIS LADY. SAY GOODBYE TO ME NOW. WE MAY NEVER... NEVER MEET AGAIN!
MOTHER! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


WISE OLD PERIC WAS AT SUPPER WITH HIS YOUNG FRIENDS JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA WHEN SALVIA RETURNED HOME.
WHO IS THAT WITH YOU, SALVIA?
BY THE STARS!

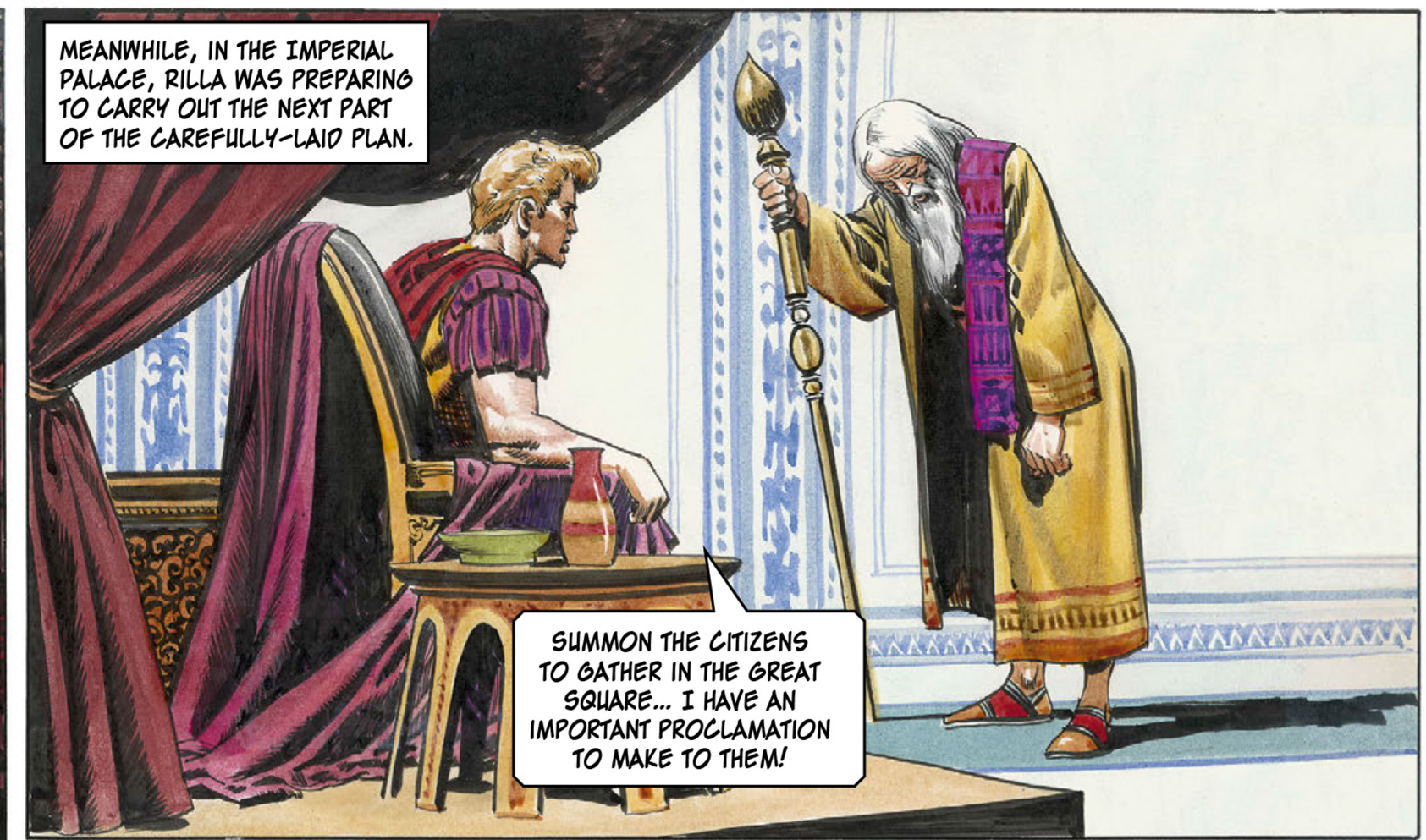

THEY STARED AT THE TWO BOYS.
SALVIA... IT CAN'T BE TRUE!
FATHER, IT IS! I DECEIVED YOU ALL THOSE YEARS AGO. I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO LEAVE THOSE BABIES TO DIE... THEY ARE INDEED THE EMPEROR'S BROTHERS!

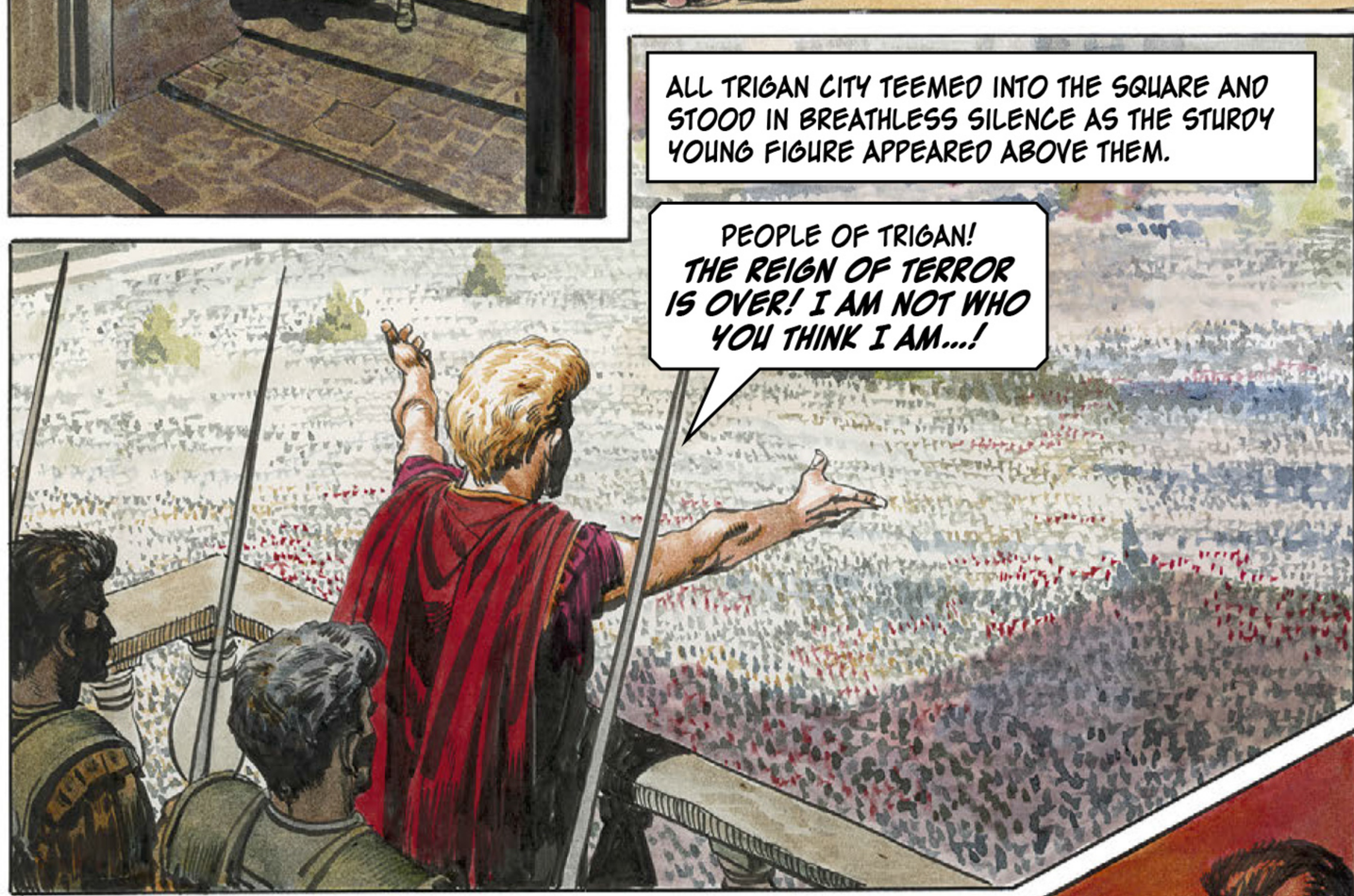

AND SO IT WAS EXPLAINED TO THE DUMBFOUNDED NIKKO AND RILLA THAT THEY WERE THE SONS OF THE LATE EMPEROR TRIGO. AND THEN...
WELL, THEN! THIS IS THE CHANCE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!
YOU MEAN...?
A MAD ANIMAL SITS ON THE IMPERIAL THRONE OF TRIGAN. YOUR TASK WILL BE TO REPLACE HIM BY ONE OF HIS BROTHERS... WITHOUT ANYONE KNOWING!

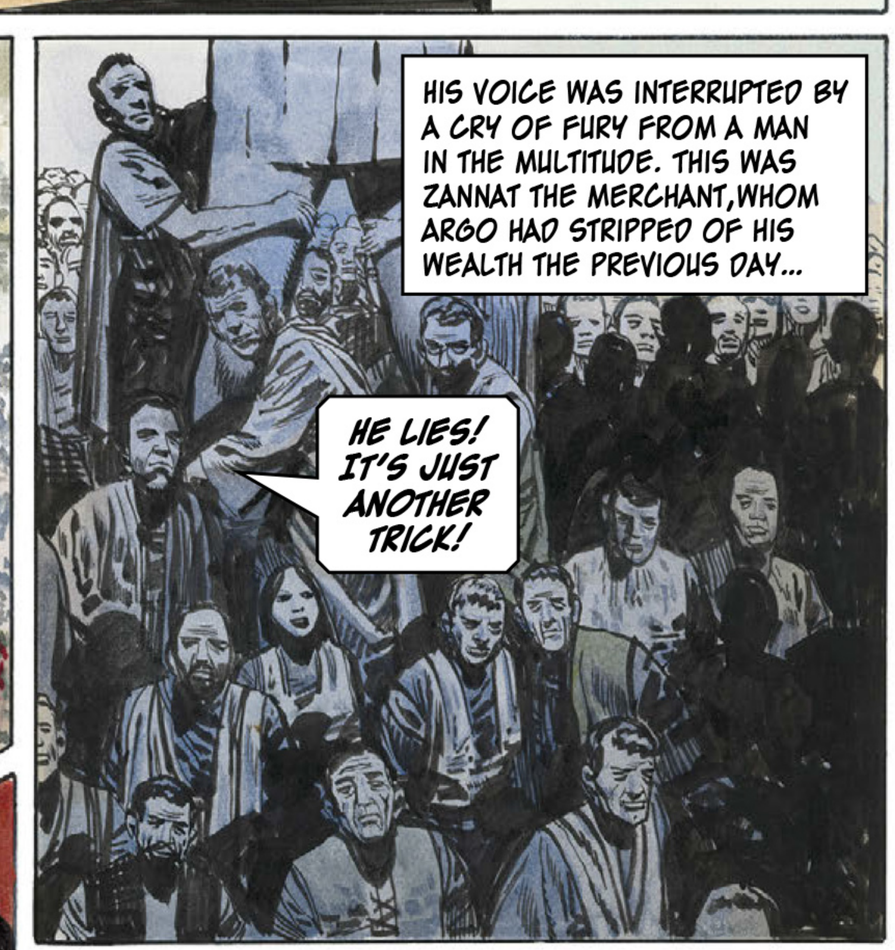
IN THE IMPERIAL PALACE, A RICHLY-DRESSED MERCHANT PROSTRATED HIMSELF BEFORE THE DREADED YOUNG EMPEROR.
YOU SENT FOR ME, IMPERIAL MAJESTY... I AM THE MERCHANT ZANNAT.
OH, YES... I REMEMBER...
THEY TELL ME YOU'RE THE WEALTHIEST MAN IN THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, YOU SCOUNDREL! WELL, I HAVE DECIDED THAT YOU WILL HAND OVER ALL YOUR MONEY AND YOUR PROPERTY TO MY FRIEND, THE WARLORD OF ELEKTON!
ZANNAT'S VOICE ROSE IN A WAIL OF DISMAY.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! YOU HAVE TURNED ME INTO A BEGGAR!
THERE, MY FRIEND... NOW YOU ARE THE WEALTHIEST MAN IN THE EMPIRE!
YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS MOST KIND!
THAT NIGHT, AS THE EMPEROR LAY ASLEEP BEHIND A GUARDED DOOR, FOUR FIGURES STOLE STEALTHILY THROUGH THE PALACE...
GET READY...
A SWIFT, CONCERTED RUSH... AND THE GUARDS WERE SILENTLY FELLED!
IN A FEW MOMENTS, RILLA, YOU WILL BE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS!

ARGO RAISED HIMSELF UP FROM HIS COUCH... TO FIND HIMSELF LOOKING INTO A FACE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN HIS OWN!
NO! IT CAN'T BE TRUE!
AH, BUT IT IS! STRIKE DOWN THE TYRANT, KEREN!
KEREN'S HARD FIST SENT ARGO SPRAWLING, SENSELESS, TO THE FLOOR.
NOW! YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO!
YES, JANNO...
A FAREWELL SALUTE...
GOOD LUCK, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
THE CONSPIRATORS LEFT, TAKING THE UNCONSCIOUS ARGO.
AT DAYBREAK, AS WAS THE CUSTOM, THE CAPTAIN OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD REPORTED TO THE EMPEROR FOR HIS DAILY ORDERS... AND RECEIVED A SHOCK!
DID... DID I HEAR YOU RIGHT, IMPERIAL MAJESTY?
YES, CAPTAIN – ARREST THRINGA!
THRINGA – THE EVIL GENIUS FROM OUTER SPACE WHO RULED ARGO'S MIND – WAS ENGAGED IN A FIENDISH SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENT WHEN THE GUARDS CAME TO HIM.
I REPEAT... BY ORDER OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!
WHA-A-A-AT?
THRINGA MOVED SWIFTLY... THERE WAS A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT!

THRINGA LEFT THE BUILDING UNHARMED. SOON HE WAS SCURRYING THROUGH THE NARROW BACK STREETS OF THE CITY, HIS EVIL MIND TEEMING WITH UNANSWERED QUESTIONS...
WHAT HAS HAPPENED? HOW COULD ARGO HAVE ESCAPED FROM MY POWER?


MEANWHILE, IN THE IMPERIAL PALACE, RILLA WAS PREPARING TO CARRY OUT THE NEXT PART OF THE CAREFULLY-LAID PLAN.
SUMMON THE CITIZENS TO GATHER IN THE GREAT SQUARE... I HAVE AN IMPORTANT PROCLAMATION TO MAKE TO THEM!


ALL TRIGAN CITY TEEMED INTO THE SQUARE AND STOOD IN BREATHLESS SILENCE AS THE STURDY YOUNG FIGURE APPEARED ABOVE THEM.
PEOPLE OF TRIGAN! THE REIGN OF TERROR IS OVER! I AM NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM...!

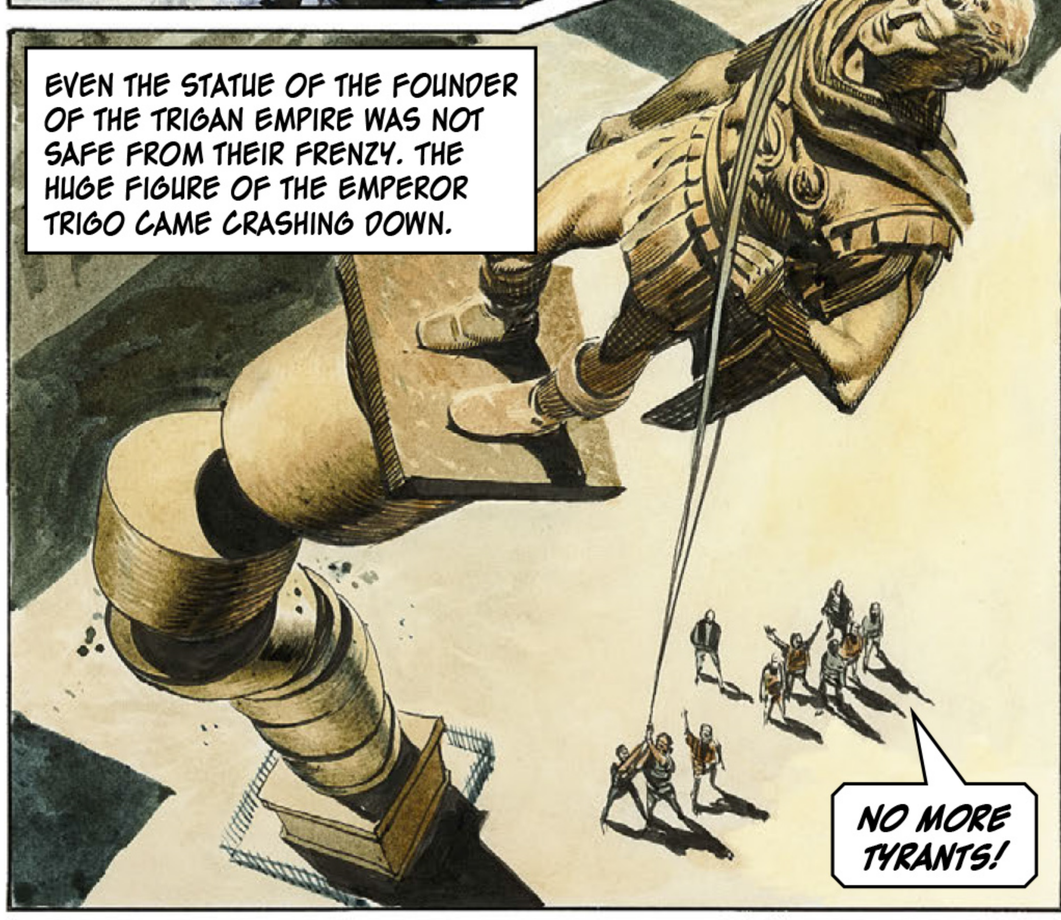

HIS VOICE WAS INTERRUPTED BY A CRY OF FURY FROM A MAN IN THE MULTITUDE. THIS WAS ZANNAT THE MERCHANT, WHOM ARGO HAD STRIPPED OF HIS WEALTH THE PREVIOUS DAY...
HE LIES! IT'S JUST ANOTHER TRICK!

A SHOT RANG OUT ACROSS THE GREAT SQUARE!
RILLA CRUMPLED AND FELL!

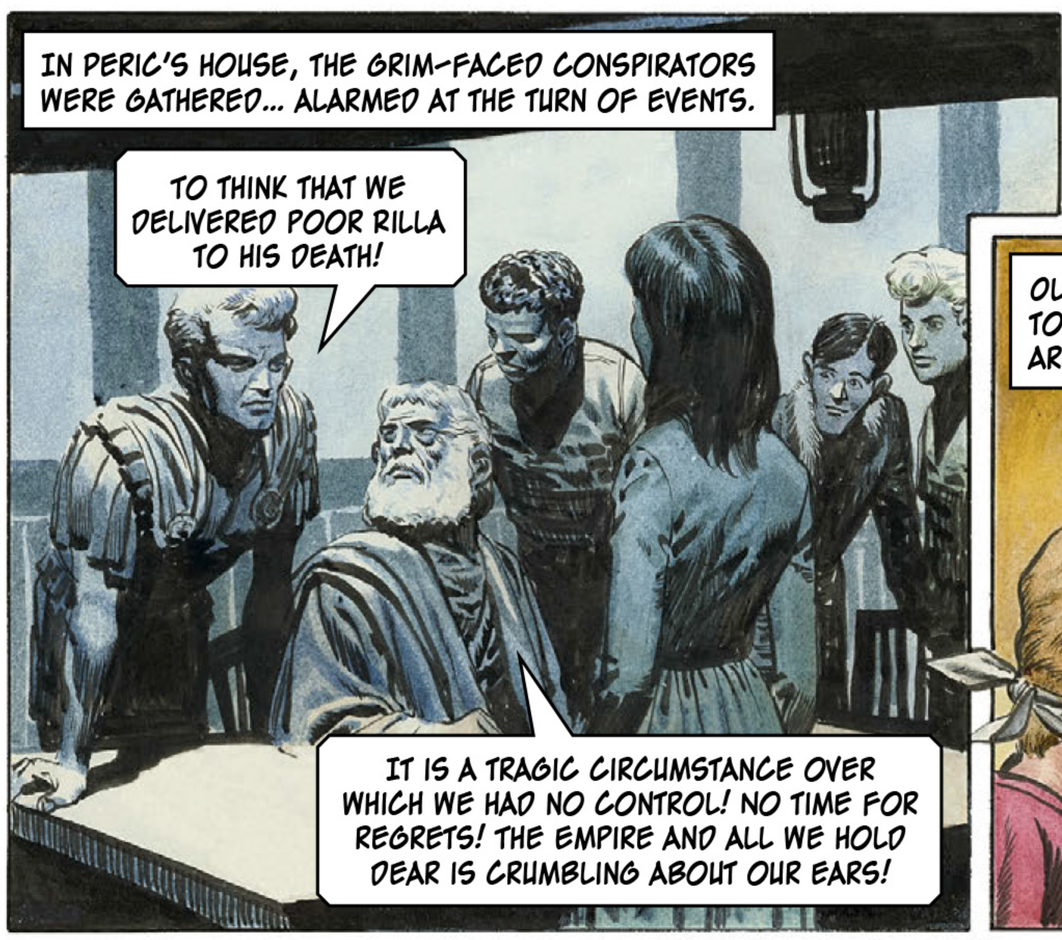
HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS NO MORE!
...SO ENDED THE BRIEF, TRAGIC CAREER OF THE SUBSTITUTE EMPEROR!

THE NEWS SPREAD THROUGH TRIGAN CITY LIKE A FOREST FIRE THAT ARGO WAS DEAD AND THAT THE REIGN OF TERROR WAS ENDED...
WE'RE FREE... FREE! TO THE PALACE! BURN DOWN THE TYRANT'S NEST!

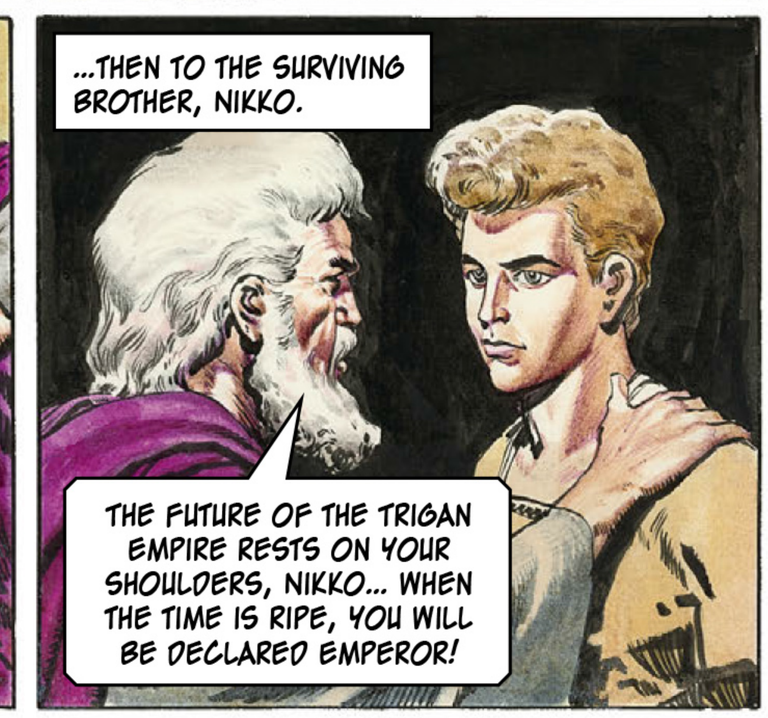
THE WORST CRIMINAL ELEMENTS OF THE CITY TOOK CHARGE. HUNGRY FOR LOOT, THEY STORMED THE IMPERIAL PALACE, TRAMPLING THE GUARDS UNDERFOOT... SMASHING AND BURNING...


EVEN THE STATUE OF THE FOUNDER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WAS NOT SAFE FROM THEIR FRENZY. THE HUGE FIGURE OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO CAME CRASHING DOWN.
NO MORE TYRANTS!

CHAOS REIGNED!
FROM NOW ON, WE'LL RULE OURSELVES! NO MORE TAXES! NO MORE WORK! LUXURY FOR ALL!


IN PERIC'S HOUSE, THE GRIM-FACED CONSPIRATORS WERE GATHERED... ALARMED AT THE TURN OF EVENTS.
TO THINK THAT WE DELIVERED POOR RILLA TO HIS DEATH!
IT IS A TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCE OVER WHICH WE HAD NO CONTROL! NO TIME FOR REGRETS! THE EMPIRE AND ALL WE HOLD DEAR IS CRUMBLING ABOUT OUR EARS!

OLD PERIC POINTED TO THE SCOWLING ARGO...
FIRST WE MUST GET RID OF THAT YOUNG MONSTER... FOR EVER!

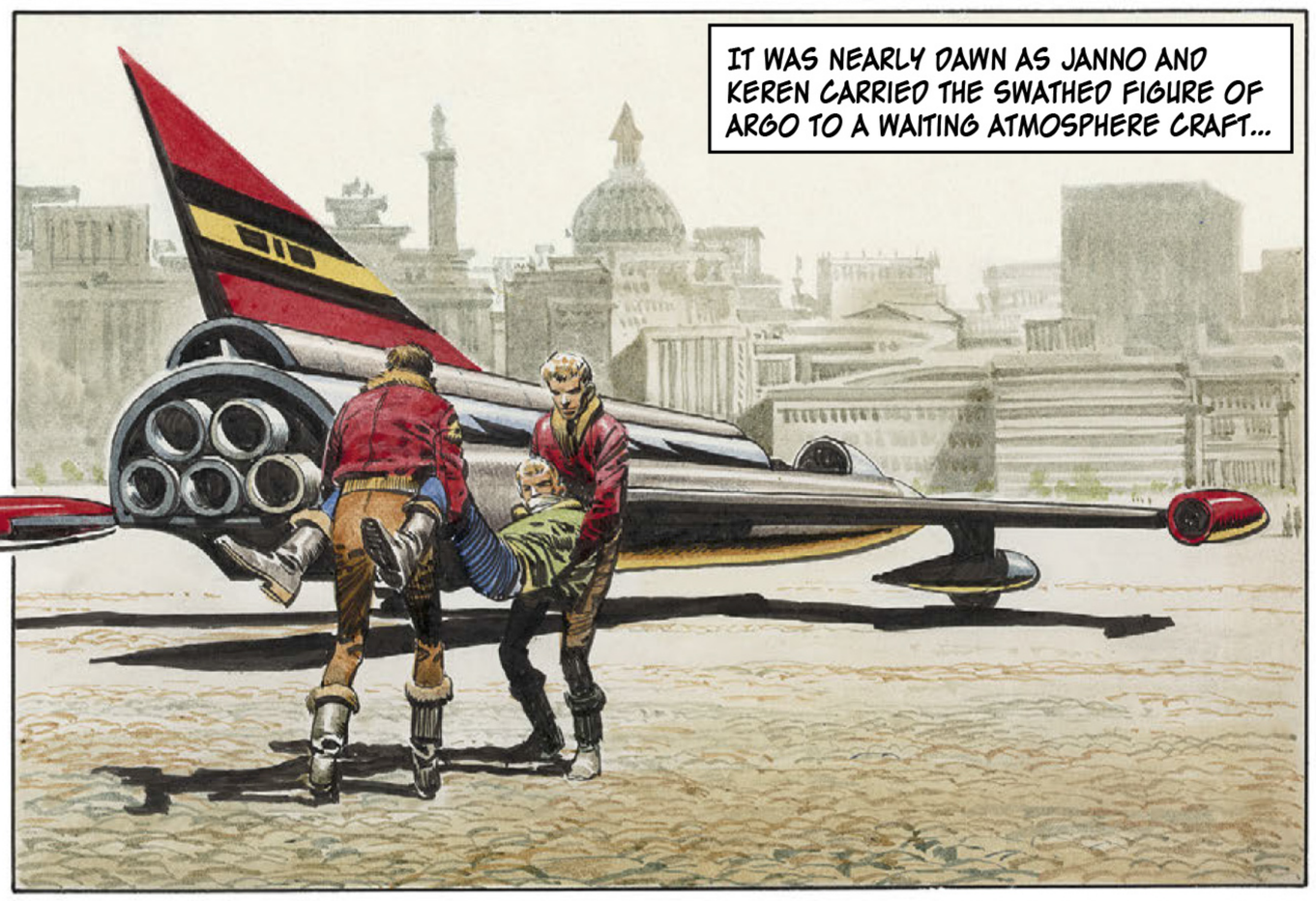

...THEN TO THE SURVIVING BROTHER, NIKKO.
THE FUTURE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE RESTS ON YOUR SHOULDERS, NIKKO... WHEN THE TIME IS RIPE, YOU WILL BE DECLARED EMPEROR!

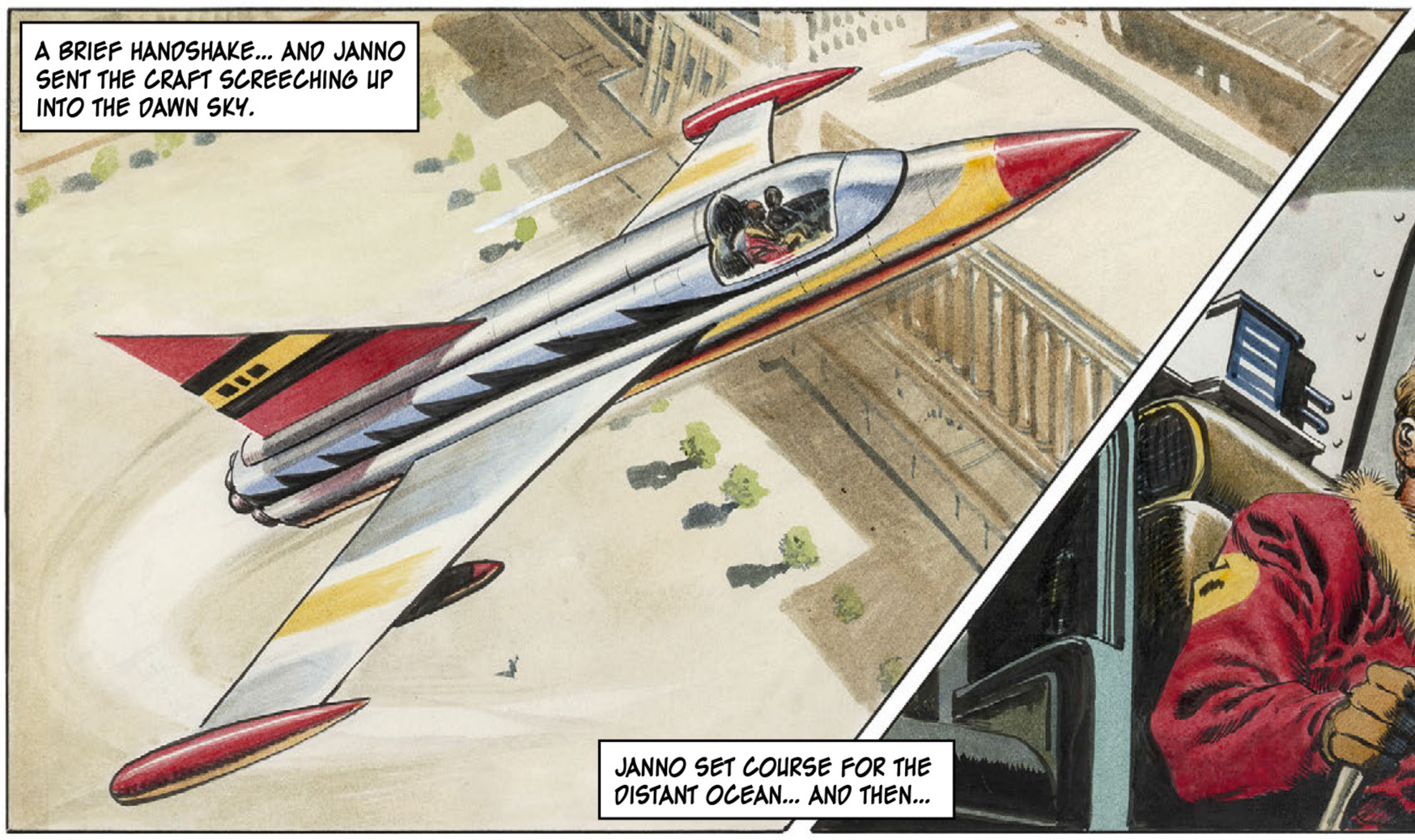
ALL THAT NIGHT, THE JUBILANT MOBS ROAMED THE STRICKEN CITY... WATCHED BY THE FIEND FROM OUTER SPACE WHO CALLED HIMSELF THRINGA.
I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT ARGO IS DEAD... OR THAT HE SLIPPED OUT OF MY POWER AND ORDERED MY ARREST! SOMETHING... SOMETHING HAPPENED...

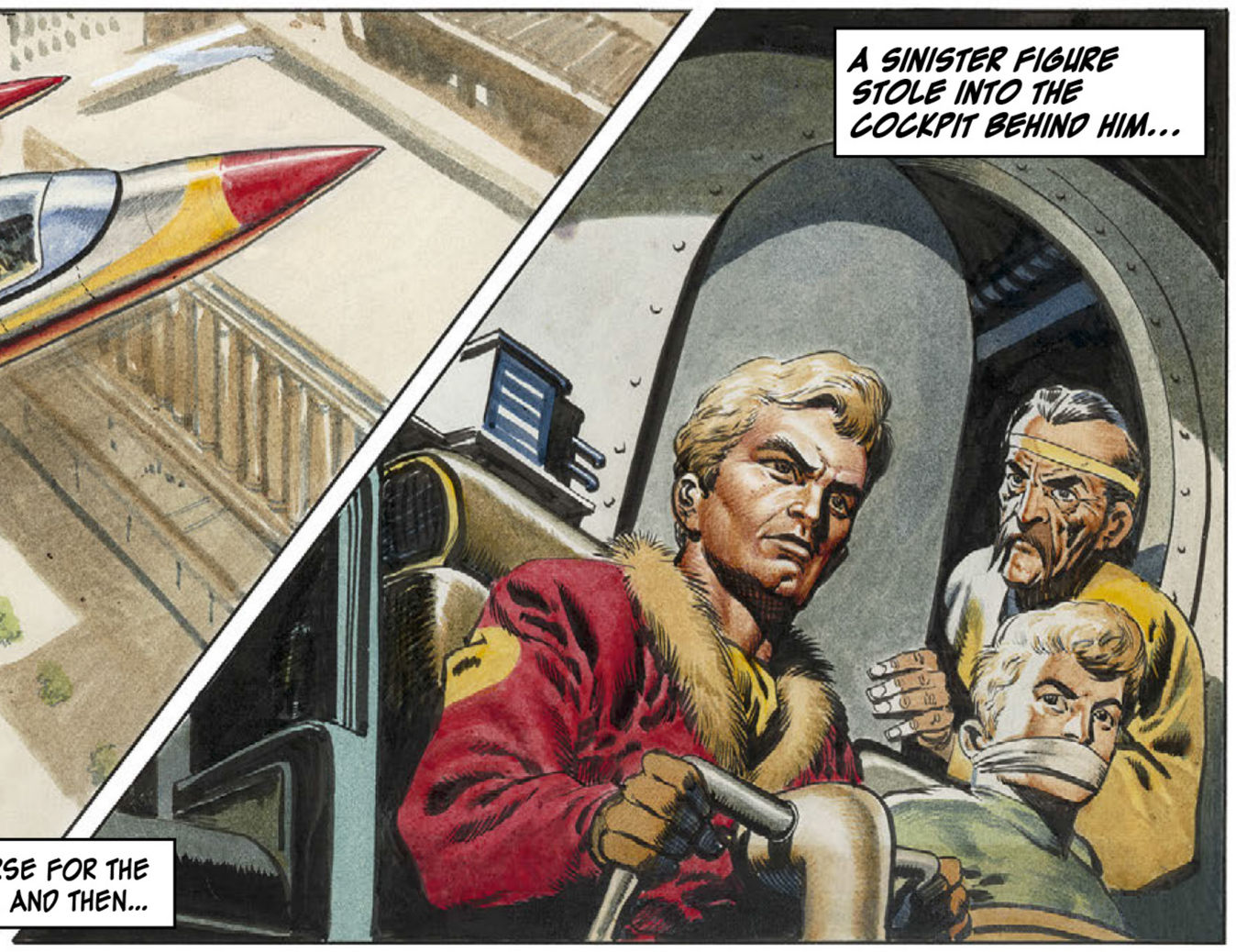
THRINGA DIRECTED HIS FANTASTIC MIND THROUGH TIME AND SPACE... TILL... AT LENGTH...
YES! HE STILL LIVES! I SEE IT ALL... THROUGH HIS EYES!

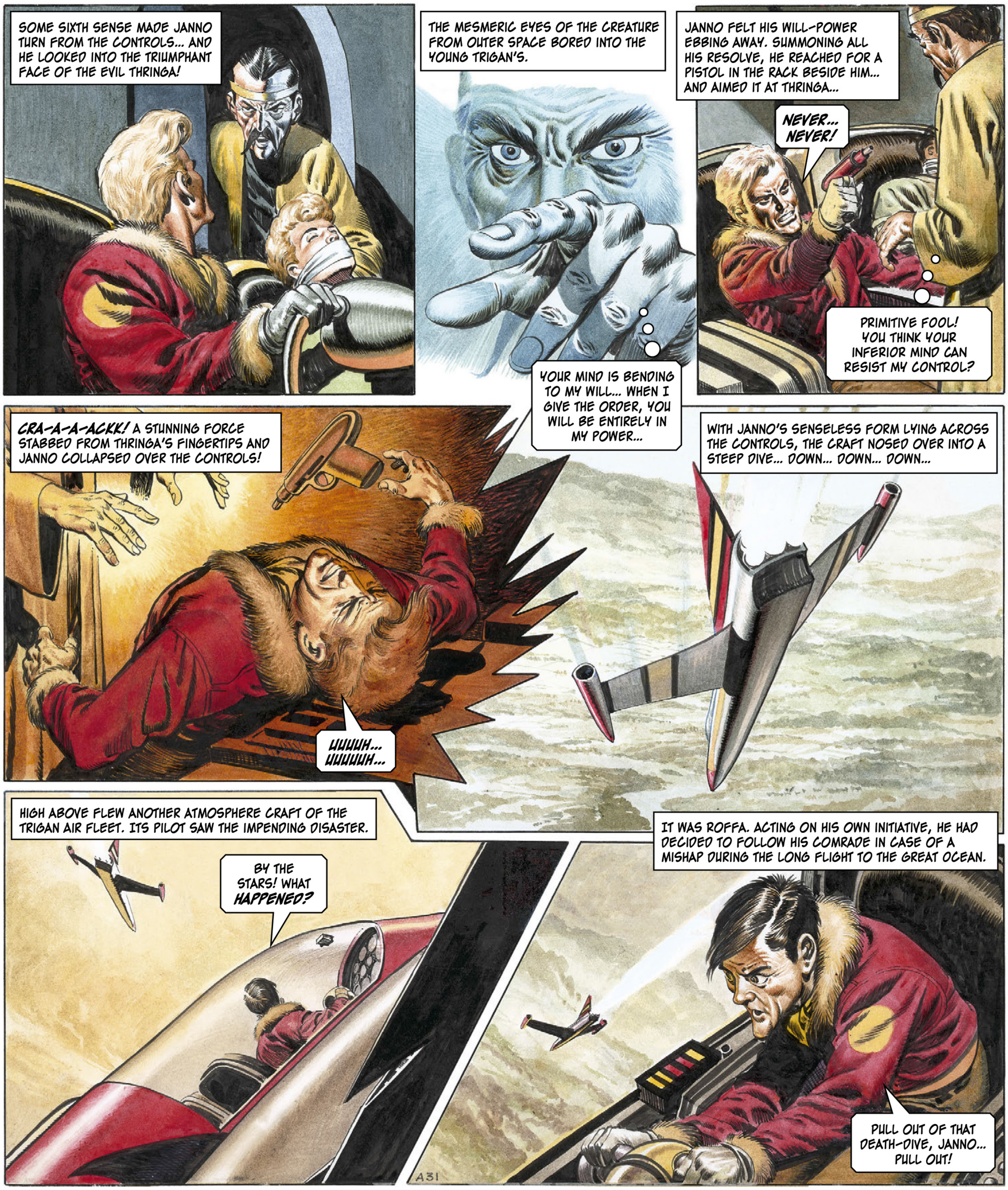
BY A FEAT OF MENTAL TELEPATHY, THE CREATURE FROM OUTER SPACE SAW AND HEARD EVERYTHING THAT WAS TAKING PLACE IN PERIC'S HOUSE... THROUGH THE MIND OF THE CAPTIVE ARGO!
JANNO! YOU WILL FLY ARGO TO AN ISLAND IN THE GREAT OCEAN... AND LEAVE HIM TO LIVE OUT HIS DAYS IN SOLITUDE!

NO DETAIL OF THE CONSPIRATORS' PLANS ESCAPED THRINGA!
AS SOON AS THE RIOTING HAS DIED DOWN AND THE PEOPLE HAVE REGAINED THEIR SANITY, WE WILL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO THEM... AND PRESENT THEM WITH THEIR RIGHTFUL EMPEROR!


IT WAS NEARLY DAWN AS JANNO AND KEREN CARRIED THE SWATHED FIGURE OF ARGO TO A WAITING ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...

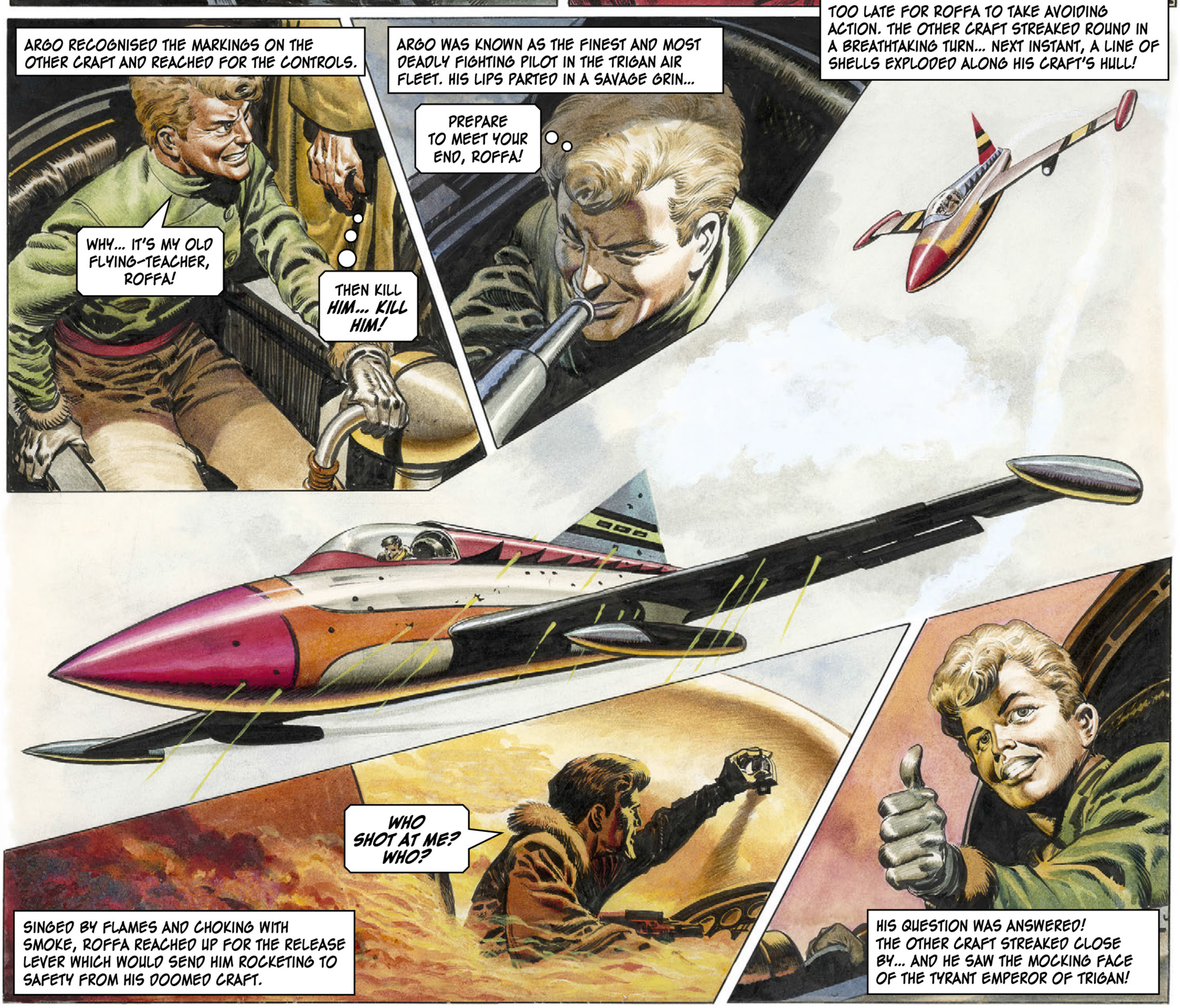

A BRIEF HANDSHAKE... AND JANNO SENT THE CRAFT SCREECHING UP INTO THE DAWN SKY.
JANNO SET COURSE FOR THE DISTANT OCEAN... AND THEN...

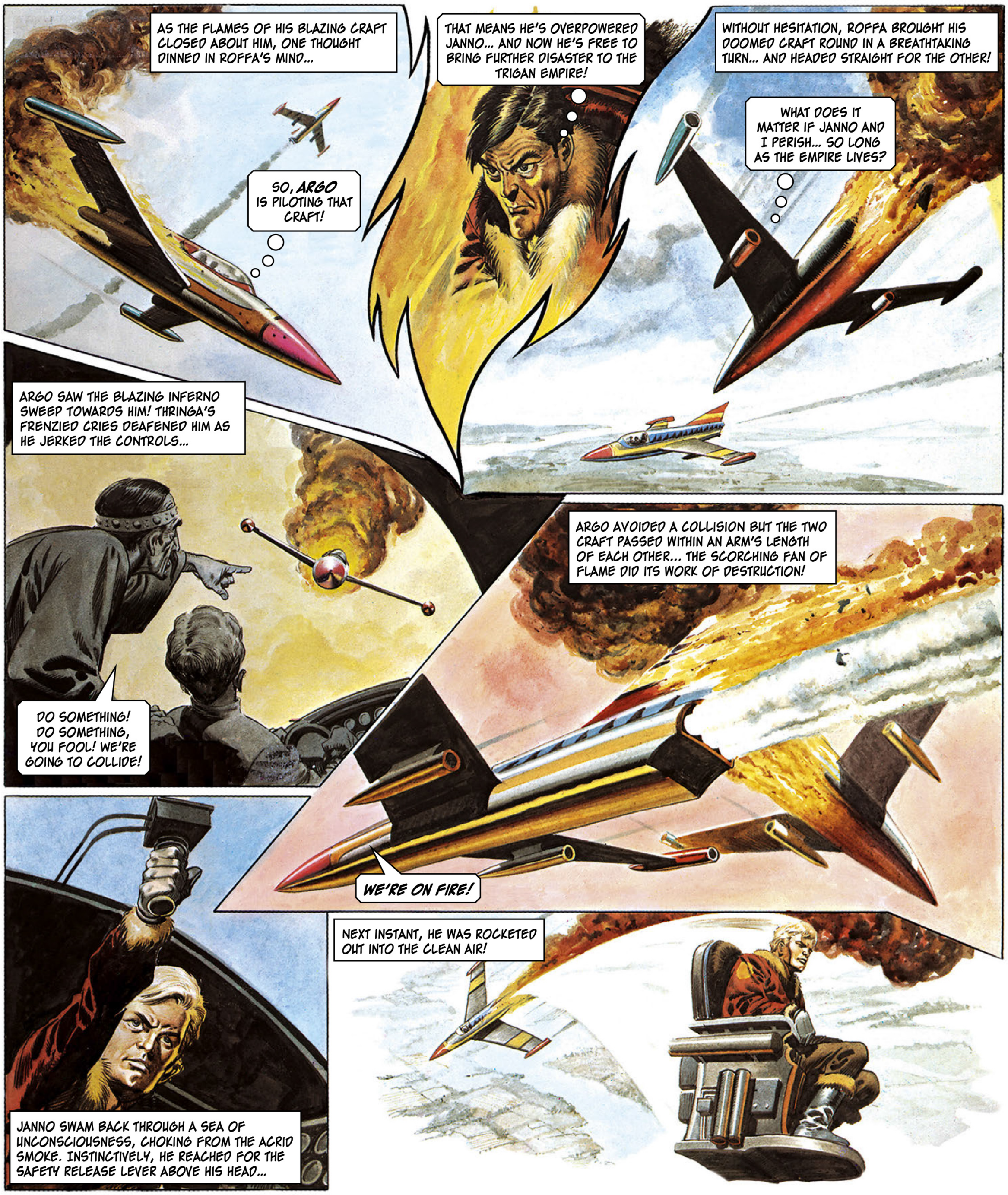

A SINISTER FIGURE STOLE INTO THE COCKPIT BEHIND HIM...


SOME SIXTH SENSE MADE JANNO TURN FROM THE CONTROLS... AND HE LOOKED INTO THE TRIUMPHANT FACE OF THE EVIL THRINGA!
THE MESMERIC EYES OF THE CREATURE FROM OUTER SPACE BORED INTO THE YOUNG TRIGAN'S.
YOUR MIND IS BENDING TO MY WILL... WHEN I GIVE THE ORDER, YOU WILL BE ENTIRELY IN MY POWER...
JANNO FELT HIS WILL-POWER EBBING AWAY. SUMMONING ALL HIS RESOLVE, HE REACHED FOR A PISTOL IN THE RACK BESIDE HIM... AND AIMED IT AT THRINGA...
NEVER... NEVER!
PRIMITIVE FOOL! YOU THINK YOUR INFERIOR MIND CAN RESIST MY CONTROL?
CRA-A-A-ACKK! A STUNNING FORCE STABBED FROM THRINGA'S FINGERTIPS AND JANNO COLLAPSED OVER THE CONTROLS!
UUUUH... UUUUUH...
WITH JANNO'S SENSELESS FORM LYING ACROSS THE CONTROLS, THE CRAFT NOSED OVER INTO A STEEP DIVE... DOWN... DOWN... DOWN...
HIGH ABOVE FLEW ANOTHER ATMOSPHERE CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET. ITS PILOT SAW THE IMPENDING DISASTER.
BY THE STARS! WHAT HAPPENED?
IT WAS ROFFA. ACTING ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE, HE HAD DECIDED TO FOLLOW HIS COMRADE IN CASE OF A MISHAP DURING THE LONG FLIGHT TO THE GREAT OCEAN.
PULL OUT OF THAT DEATH-DIVE, JANNO... PULL OUT!
A31

THRINGA WAS NO PILOT, BUT HIS FANTASTIC INTELLIGENCE ENABLED HIM TO BRING THE DIVING CRAFT UNDER SOME DEGREE OF CONTROL. LOOKING AROUND, HE SAW ROFFA'S CRAFT NEARBY.
TEN THOUSAND CURSES... WE'VE BEEN FOLLOWED!

THRINGA HASTILY USED HIS POWERS TO ROUSE THE UNCONSCIOUS ARGO.
NOW, MY FRIEND, YOU MUST DEAL WITH HIM!


ARGO RECOGNISED THE MARKINGS ON THE OTHER CRAFT AND REACHED FOR THE CONTROLS.
WHY... IT'S MY OLD FLYING-TEACHER, ROFFA!
ARGO WAS KNOWN AS THE FINEST AND MOST DEADLY FIGHTING PILOT IN THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET. HIS LIPS PARTED IN A SAVAGE GRIN...
PREPARE TO MEET YOUR END, ROFFA!
THEN KILL HIM... KILL HIM!
TOO LATE FOR ROFFA TO TAKE AVOIDING ACTION. THE OTHER CRAFT STREAKED ROUND IN A BREATHTAKING TURN... NEXT INSTANT, A LINE OF SHELLS EXPLODED ALONG HIS CRAFT'S HULL!
WHO SHOT AT ME? WHO?
SINGED BY FLAMES AND CHOKING WITH SMOKE, ROFFA REACHED UP FOR THE RELEASE LEVER WHICH WOULD SEND HIM ROCKETING TO SAFETY FROM HIS DOOMED CRAFT.
HIS QUESTION WAS ANSWERED! THE OTHER CRAFT STREAKED CLOSE BY... AND HE SAW THE MOCKING FACE OF THE TYRANT EMPEROR OF TRIGAN!

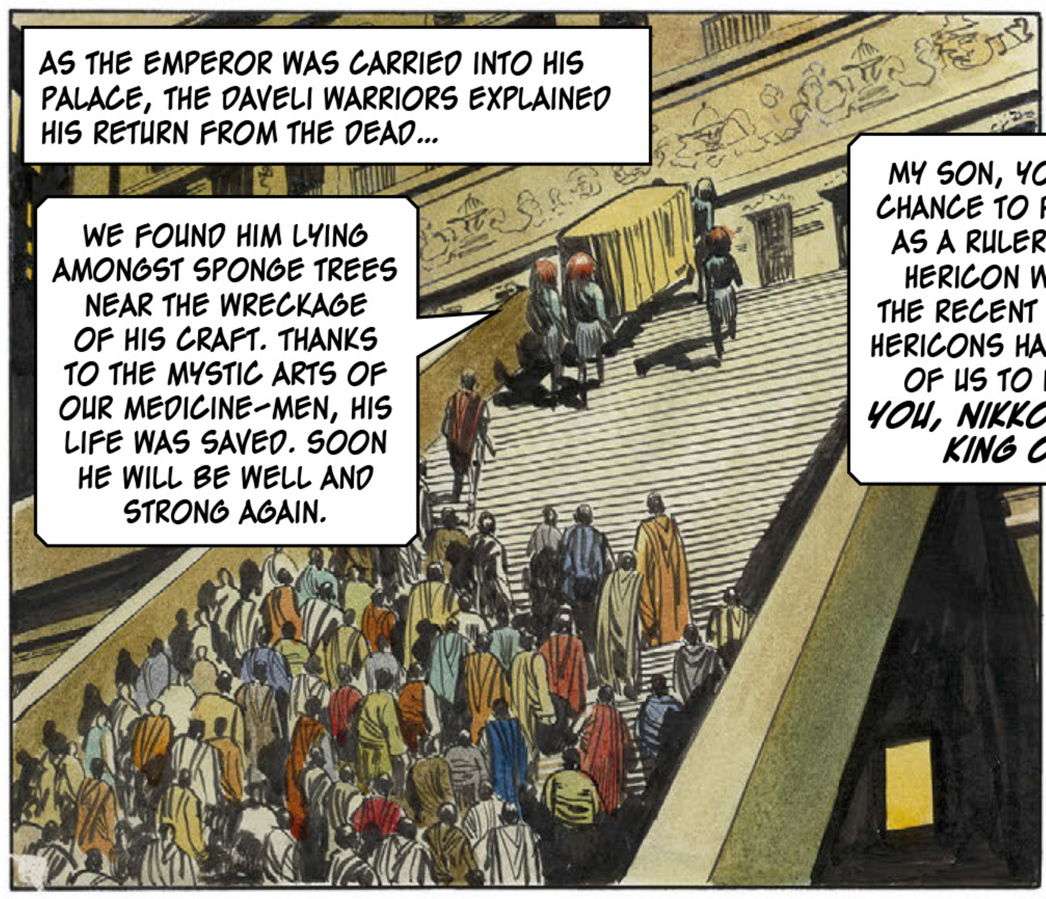

AS THE FLAMES OF HIS BLAZING CRAFT CLOSED ABOUT HIM, ONE THOUGHT DINNED IN ROFFA'S MIND...
SO, ARGO IS PILOTING THAT CRAFT!
THAT MEANS HE'S OVERPOWERED JANNO... AND NOW HE'S FREE TO BRING FURTHER DISASTER TO THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
WITHOUT HESITATION, ROFFA BROUGHT HIS DOOMED CRAFT ROUND IN A BREATHTAKING TURN... AND HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE OTHER!
WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF JANNO AND I PERISH... SO LONG AS THE EMPIRE LIVES?
ARGO SAW THE BLAZING INFERNO SWEEP TOWARDS HIM! THRINGA'S FRENZIED CRIES DEAFENED HIM AS HE JERKED THE CONTROLS...
DO SOMETHING! DO SOMETHING, YOU FOOL! WE'RE GOING TO COLLIDE!
ARGO AVOIDED A COLLISION BUT THE TWO CRAFT PASSED WITHIN AN ARM'S LENGTH OF EACH OTHER... THE SCORCHING FAN OF FLAME DID ITS WORK OF DESTRUCTION!
WE'RE ON FIRE!
NEXT INSTANT, HE WAS ROCKETED OUT INTO THE CLEAN AIR!
JANNO SWAM BACK THROUGH A SEA OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS, CHOKING FROM THE ACRID SMOKE. INSTINCTIVELY, HE REACHED FOR THE SAFETY RELEASE LEVER ABOVE HIS HEAD...

HOVERING IN SAFETY, HE WATCHED THE DOOMED CRAFT BEGIN ITS DEATH DIVE.
SO PERISHES THE TYRANT OF TRIGAN... AND THE EVIL GENIUS!
AND THEN...
A HEARTY SHOUT BROUGHT JANNO'S HEAD WHIPPING ROUND.
HEY! JANNO!
ROFFA! BY ALL THE STARS... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
A FEW DAYS LATER, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, JANNO AND ROFFA WERE AMONGST THOSE WHO WATCHED OLD PERIC ADDRESSING ARGO'S SURVIVING BROTHER, NIKKO.
THE WHOLE WEIGHT OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE IS ABOUT TO FALL ON YOUR YOUNG SHOULDERS, MY BOY. THE RIOTING IN THE CITY HAS DIED DOWN AND THE TIME HAS COME TO PROCLAIM YOU TO THE PEOPLE AS OUR EMPEROR!
SOON AFTER, A PARTY OF BEFEATHERED WARRIORS FROM FAR-OFF DAVELI ENTERED THE CITY GATES, BEARING A LITTER.
THE PROCLAMATION CEREMONY WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE GREAT SQUARE. HEEDLESS OF THE ANGRY CRIES ALL ROUND THEM, THE MEN OF DAVELI THRUST THEIR WAY TO THE FORE.
HOW DARE YOU INTERRUPT THE SOLEMN RITE OF PROCLAIMING THE NEW EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS?
THEN CAME THE STUNNING REPLY!
HOW CAN THIS BE SO? IN THAT LITTER IS A MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS... HIS NAME IS TRIGO!

ONE OF THE DAVELI WARRIORS DREW BACK THE AWNING OF THE LITTER AND REVEALED THE MAN LYING THERE.
BEHOLD!
BY ALL THE STARS! IT IS INDEED... UNCLE TRIGO!

THE TRIGAN EMPEROR OPENED HIS EYES AND SMILED WEAKLY.
BRAG... IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
TRIGO, MY BROTHER... YOU HAVE RETURNED FROM THE DEAD!

THEN TRIGO MET THE GAZE OF THE TALL YOUTH STANDING NEAR BY AND HIS BROWS FURROWED WITH PUZZLEMENT.
CAN THAT BE... ARGO?
NO! ARGO HAS PAID THE PENALTY FOR HIS EVIL WORKS. THIS IS THE SURVIVOR OF THE TRIPLET SONS BORN TO YOU ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, TRIGO. HIS NAME IS NIKKO!


AS THE EMPEROR WAS CARRIED INTO HIS PALACE, THE DAVELI WARRIORS EXPLAINED HIS RETURN FROM THE DEAD...
WE FOUND HIM LYING AMONGST SPONGE TREES NEAR THE WRECKAGE OF HIS CRAFT. THANKS TO THE MYSTIC ARTS OF OUR MEDICINE-MEN, HIS LIFE WAS SAVED. SOON HE WILL BE WELL AND STRONG AGAIN.

SOME MONTHS LATER, THE EMPEROR SUMMONED NIKKO.
MY SON, YOU SHALL HAVE THE CHANCE TO PROVE YOUR WORTH AS A RULER. KING KASSAR OF HERICON WAS SLAIN DURING THE RECENT TROUBLES AND THE HERICONS HAVE ASKED FOR ONE OF US TO RULE OVER THEM. YOU, NIKKO, ARE TO BE THE KING OF HERICON!
I AM HONOURED, FATHER!

YOU THREE OFFICERS WILL ACCOMPANY MY SON ON HIS JOURNEY TO HERICON AND REMAIN THERE AS HIS AIDES.
VERY GOOD, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!

SOME DAYS LATER, NIKKO AND HIS AIDES LEFT TRIGAN CITY FOR THE LONG JOURNEY TO HERICON. THEY TRAVELLED IN A LAND-CRAFT.

FOR DAYS THEY SPED THROUGH THE WILDERNESS OF VORG AND INTO THE TRACKLESS VALLEYS AND MOUNTAINS BEYOND. AND THEN, ONE DAY...
A MASSIVE STORM AHEAD... WE'D BETTER TAKE SHELTER IN ONE OF THE GORGES!

AS JANNO BROUGHT THE CRAFT INTO A STEEP-SIDED GORGE, THE SKIES SEEMED TO SPLIT ASUNDER AND LIGHTNING FORKED DOWN.

WATCH IT, JANNO!

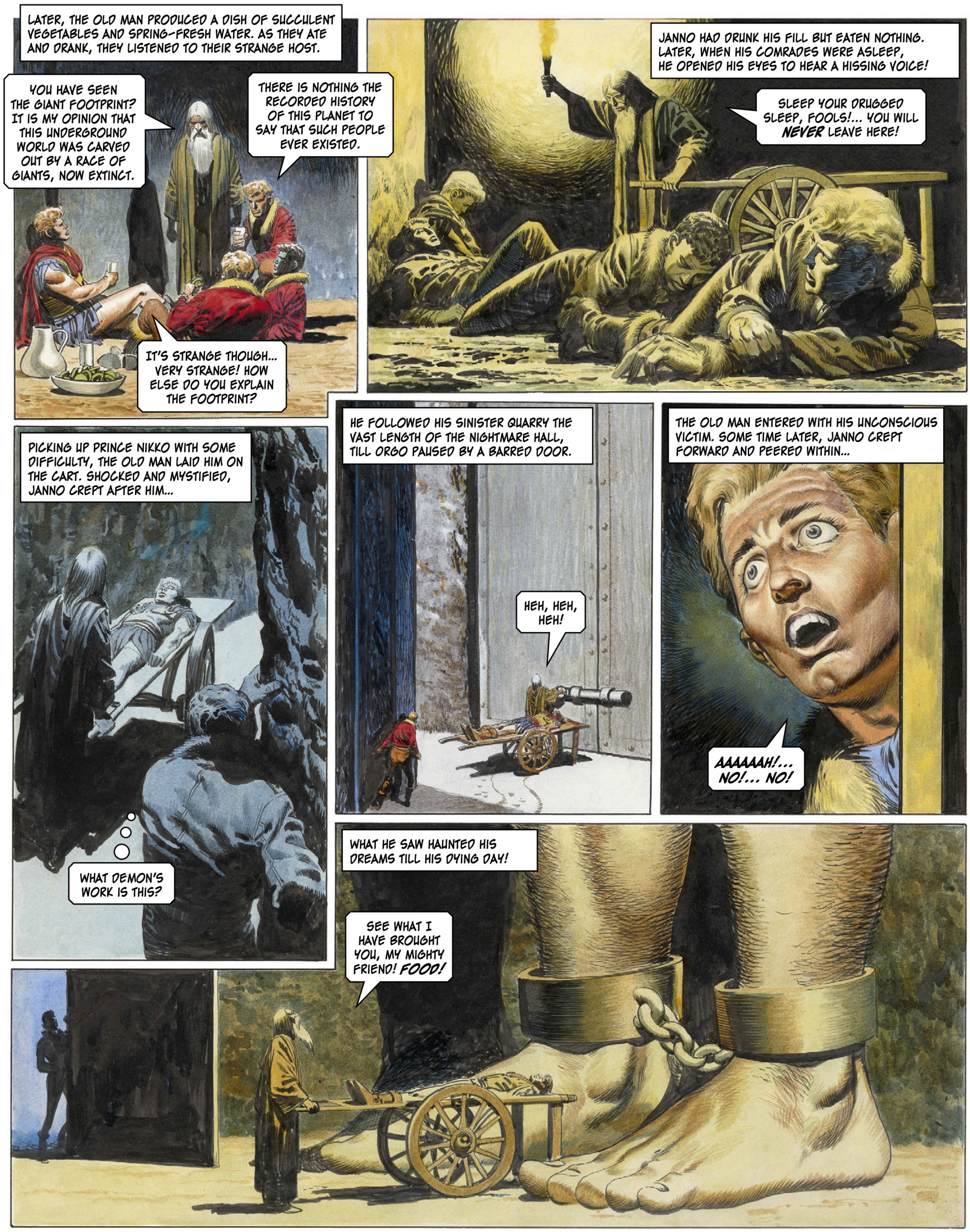
I CAN'T CONTROL IT IN THIS INFERNO!

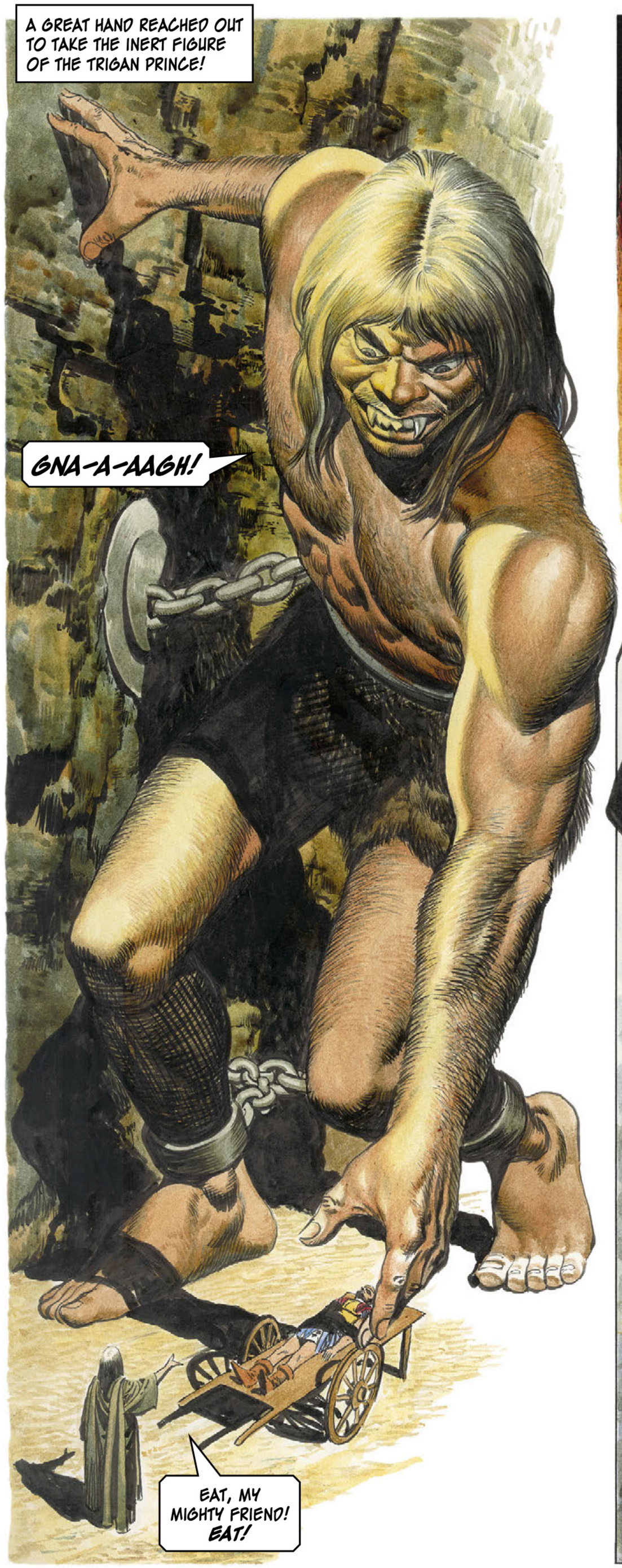
AND THEN!

AAAAAH! LOOK! THE WHOLE MOUNTAIN IS COMING DOWN ON US!

DISASTER!

ROFFA AND THE PRINCE RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE OTHERS POINTED OUT THEIR FANTASTIC FIND. THE FOUR OF THEM WERE EXAMINING THE MONSTER FOOTPRINT WHEN... THEY SAW A LIGHT...
BY THE STARS!
WHO'S THERE?
A QUAVERING VOICE ANSWERED.
HAVE NO FEAR, MASTERS... I AM ONLY A DEFENCELESS OLD MAN!
WHO ARE YOU?
AND WHAT IS THIS NIGHTMARE PLACE?
MY NAME IS ORGO, MASTERS. AND I AM OF THE TRIGAN RACE LIKE YOURSELVES... ONCE I WATCHED OVER MY FATHER'S GELF HERD ON THE FOOTHILLS OF THE MOUNTAINS...
ORGO TOLD HIS STORY AND THE FOUR YOUTHS SAW IT IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS... "ONE DAY, LONG AGO, I CLIMBED DOWN INTO A HOLE TO RESCUE A STRAYING GELF... AND FELL..."
AAAAAAAAH!
"I LANDED HEAVILY BUT UNHARMED ON A BED OF VEGETATION. THERE WAS NO HOPE OF CLIMBING THE SHEER-SIDED PIT... BUT I SAW ANOTHER WAY..."
PERHAPS THAT IS A WAY OUT...
"AFTER STUMBLING FOR MANY DAYS THROUGH THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAINS, I CAME TO THE VAST HALL YOU ARE IN NOW AND I WAS STRICKEN WITH AWE AND WONDER..."
I HAVE REMAINED HERE EVER SINCE, WITH NO HOPE OF EVER RETURNING TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE. THERE IS FOOD AND DRINK HERE IN ABUNDANCE AND I HAVE GROWN ALMOST TO LOVE MY PRISON UNDER THE MOUNTAINS.
WELL, YOUR IMPRISONMENT IS OVER... YOU WILL BE ABLE TO LEAVE WITH US, ORGO.

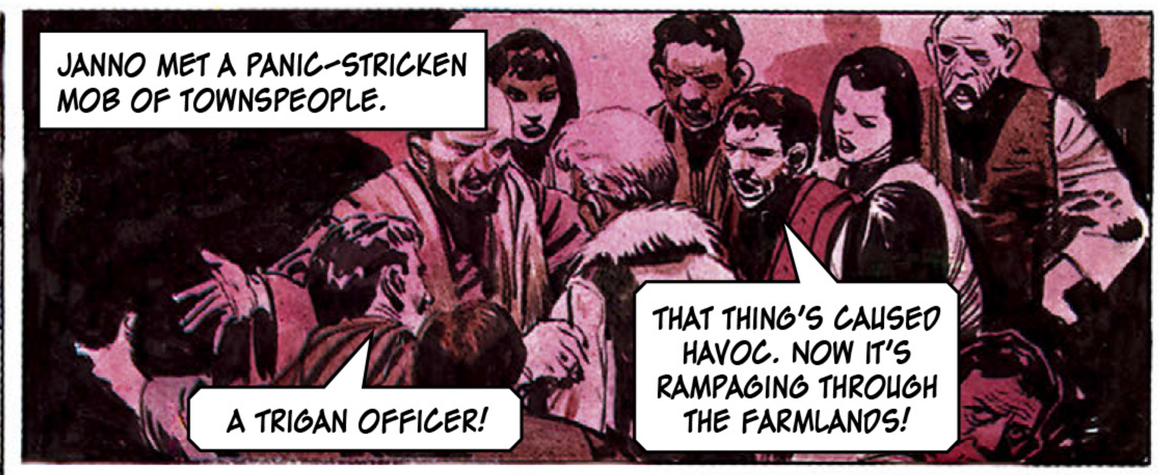

LATER, THE OLD MAN PRODUCED A DISH OF SUCCULENT VEGETABLES AND SPRING-FRESH WATER. AS THEY ATE AND DRANK, THEY LISTENED TO THEIR STRANGE HOST.
YOU HAVE SEEN THE GIANT FOOTPRINT? IT IS MY OPINION THAT THIS UNDERGROUND WORLD WAS CARVED OUT BY A RACE OF GIANTS, NOW EXTINCT.
THERE IS NOTHING THE RECORDED HISTORY OF THIS PLANET TO SAY THAT SUCH PEOPLE EVER EXISTED.
IT'S STRANGE THOUGH... VERY STRANGE! HOW ELSE DO YOU EXPLAIN THE FOOTPRINT?
JANNO HAD DRUNK HIS FILL BUT EATEN NOTHING. LATER, WHEN HIS COMRADES WERE ASLEEP, HE OPENED HIS EYES TO HEAR A HISSING VOICE!
SLEEP YOUR DRUGGED SLEEP, FOOLS!... YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE HERE!
PICKING UP PRINCE NIKKO WITH SOME DIFFICULTY, THE OLD MAN LAID HIM ON THE CART. SHOCKED AND MYSTIFIED, JANNO CREPT AFTER HIM...
WHAT DEMON'S WORK IS THIS?
HE FOLLOWED HIS SINISTER QUARRY THE VAST LENGTH OF THE NIGHTMARE HALL, TILL ORGO PAUSED BY A BARRED DOOR.
HEH, HEH, HEH!
THE OLD MAN ENTERED WITH HIS UNCONSCIOUS VICTIM. SOME TIME LATER, JANNO CREPT FORWARD AND PEERED WITHIN...
AAAAAAH!... NO!... NO!
WHAT HE SAW HAUNTED HIS DREAMS TILL HIS DYING DAY!
SEE WHAT I HAVE BROUGHT YOU, MY MIGHTY FRIEND! FOOD!


A GREAT HAND REACHED OUT TO TAKE THE INERT FIGURE OF THE TRIGAN PRINCE!
GNA-A-AAGH!
EAT, MY MIGHTY FRIEND! EAT!

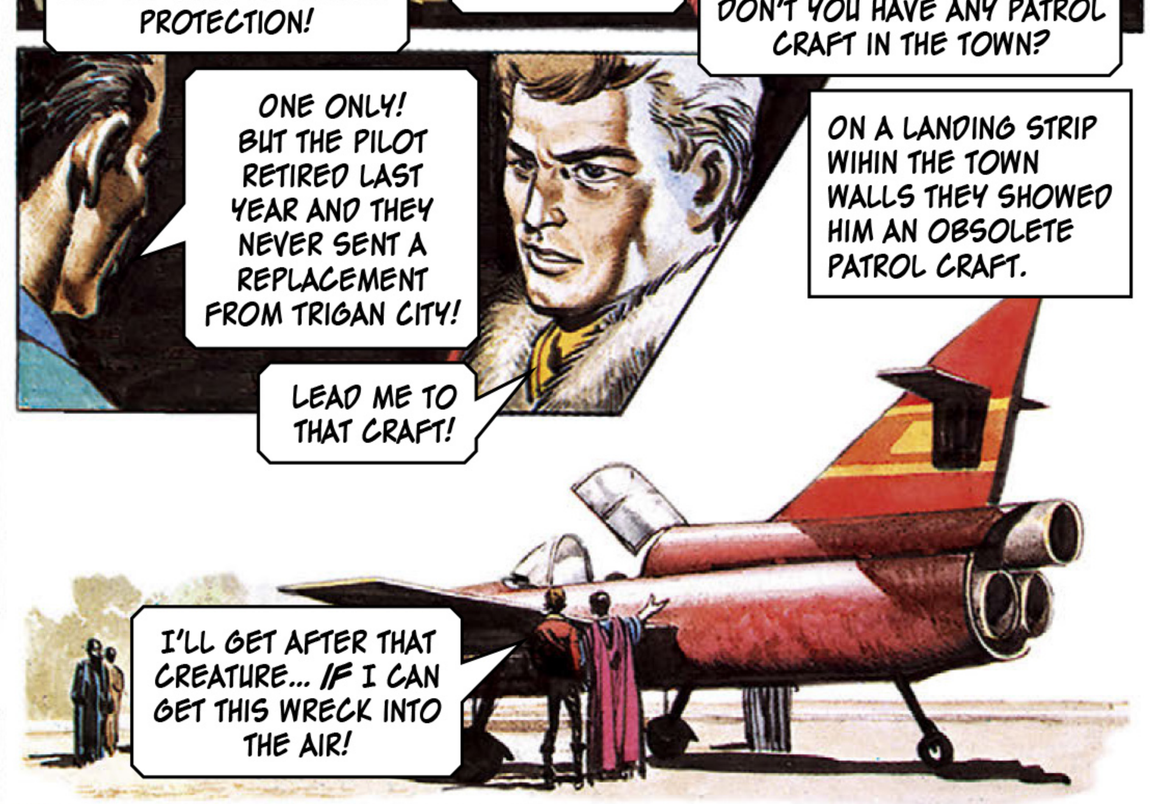
WITHOUT HESITATION, THE WATCHING JANNO DREW HIS PISTOL, TOOK HASTY AIM... AND FIRED!
THE PROJECTILE SCORED A SCARLET FURROW ACROSS THE MIGHTY HAND AND THE CREATURE ROARED WITH ANIMAL FURY.
EXERTING ITS FANTASTIC STRENGTH, THE MONSTER TORE HIMSELF FREE OF THE IMPRISONING CHAINS!
GA-A-A-A-AGH!
AAAAAGH!... HE'S FREE!

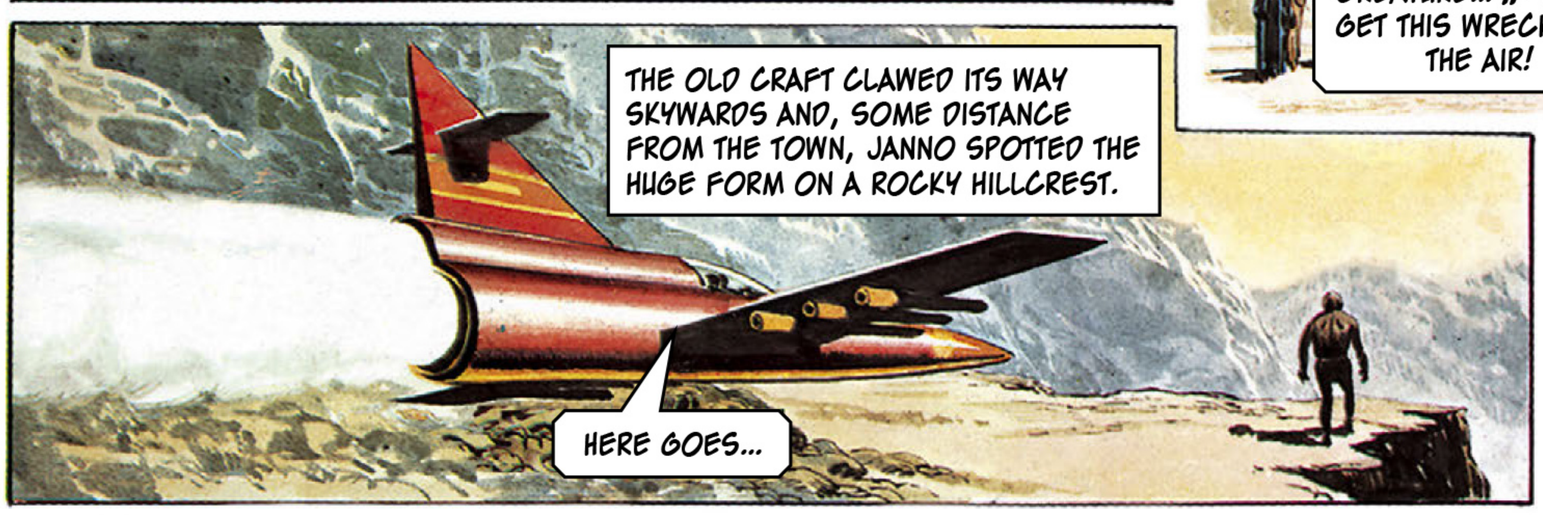
JANNO THREW HIMSELF SIDEWAYS AS THE HUGE FORM PASSED OVER HIM. A LENGTH OF SWINGING CHAIN STRUCK HIM... AND HE KNEW NO MORE.
SOME TIME LATER, HE RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM.
ORGO!
THE OLD MAN STIRRED AND OPENED HIS EYES, FEARFULLY...
NOW! SPEAK, OR IT WILL BE THE WORSE FOR YOU! WHAT IS THAT FANTASTIC CREATURE?
HE IS THE LAST OF THE VANISHED RACE OF GIANTS I TOLD YOU ABOUT... I KEPT HIM IN MY POWER BY FEEDING HIM SOME OF THE DRUGGED VEGETABLE I GAVE YOUR COMPANIONS... WITHOUT THE DRUG HE IS A KILLER!
THEY STARED DOWN THE VAST HALL AT THE TRACKS OF THE MONSTER.
AND NOW HE HAS FOUND HIS WAY TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE! BY THE STARS! THE HAVOC HE'S GOING TO CAUSE!
NO POWER IN THE UNIVERSE WILL GET HIM BACK NOW!
I'M GOING AFTER HIM. YOU STAY HERE AND TAKE CARE OF MY COMRADES. IF A HAIR OF THEIR HEADS IS HARMED WHEN I GET BACK...
I... I WILL NOT HARM THEM...
JANNO SET OFF TO CLIMB OUT OF THE VALLEY. HE KNEW THAT THERE WAS A TOWN NEARBY. AND WHEN HE REACHED THE HEIGHTS AND LOOKED DOWN...
TOO LATE! IT'S HAPPENING ALREADY!
DOWN IN THE STREETS OF THE TOWN BELOW... PANIC AND CHAOS!
GNA-A-A-AGH!

THE HUGE CREATURE TRAMPLED A TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION ACROSS THE TOWN AND BURST OUT THROUGH THE WALLS.
GNA-A-AGH!


JANNO MET A PANIC-STRICKEN MOB OF TOWNSPEOPLE.
A TRIGAN OFFICER!
THAT THING'S CAUSED HAVOC. NOW IT'S RAMPAGING THROUGH THE FARMLANDS!

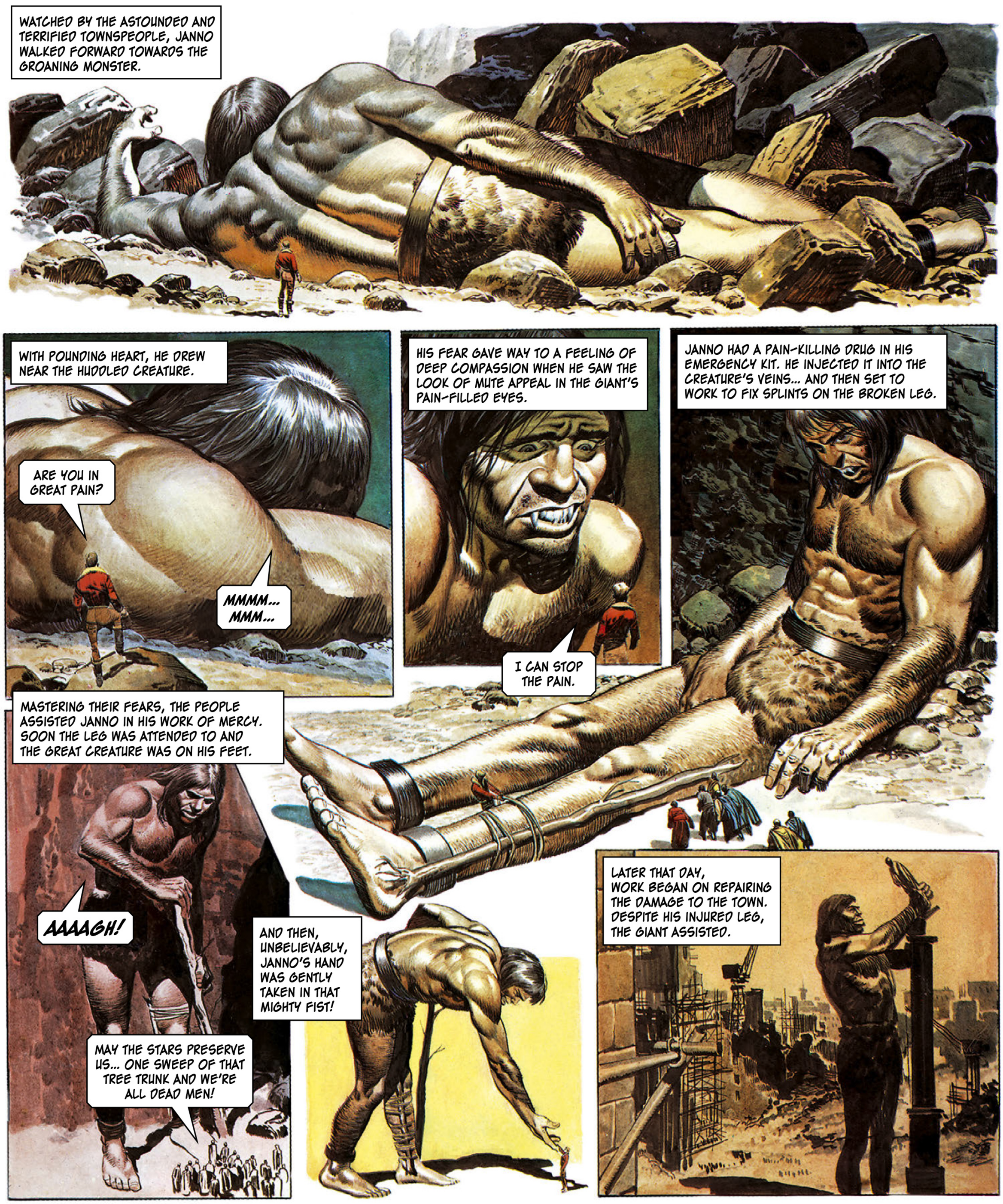
WE PAY TRIGAN TAXES AND WE DEMAND TRIGAN PROTECTION!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE...
QUIET, ALL OF YOU! DON'T YOU HAVE ANY PATROL CRAFT IN THE TOWN?


ONE ONLY! BUT THE PILOT RETIRED LAST YEAR AND THEY NEVER SENT A REPLACEMENT FROM TRIGAN CITY!
ON A LANDING STRIP WIHIN THE TOWN WALLS THEY SHOWED HIM AN OBSOLETE PATROL CRAFT.
LEAD ME TO THAT CRAFT!
I'LL GET AFTER THAT CREATURE... IF I CAN GET THIS WRECK INTO THE AIR!


THE OLD CRAFT CLAWED ITS WAY SKYWARDS AND, SOME DISTANCE FROM THE TOWN, JANNO SPOTTED THE HUGE FORM ON A ROCKY HILLCREST.
HERE GOES...

HE DIVED... AND HIS FIRST BURST OF GUNFIRE SPLATTERED ALL ROUND THE GIANT FIGURE.
I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED THE GUNS WOULDN'T BE ACCURATE!
NA-A-A-AAGH!

WITH A HOWL OF FURY, THE CREATURE PICKED UP A MASSIVE BOULDER AND HURLED IT AT THE ONCOMING CRAFT.
JANNO FELT THE SHATTERING IMPACT... THE CONTROLS WERE ALMOST TORN FROM HIS GRASP!
HE MANAGED TO REGAIN CONTROL, BUT THE CRAFT HAD SUFFERED ITS DEATH BLOW... THERE WAS NOT MUCH TIME... HE WENT IN AGAIN, GUNS BLAZING...
THIS IS MY LAST CHANCE... THEN I'LL HAVE TO EJECT FROM THE CRAFT BEFORE IT BLOWS UP!
THEN... IT HAPPENED!
E-E-E-A-A-AGH!
LATER - MUCH LATER - WHEN JANNO HAD ESCAPED UNSCATHED FROM THE DOOMED CRAFT, HE JOINED THE CROWD OF TOWNSPEOPLE WHO FLOCKED TO SEE THE HUGE FORM LYING UNDER THE CLIFF FACE.
FINISH HIM OFF!
HE'S STILL ALIVE... SHOOT HIM!
BUT JANNO'S VOICE RANG OUT...
NO! HOLD YOUR FIRE!


WATCHED BY THE ASTOUNDED AND TERRIFIED TOWNSPEOPLE, JANNO WALKED FORWARD TOWARDS THE GROANING MONSTER.
WITH POUNDING HEART, HE DREW NEAR THE HUDDLED CREATURE.
ARE YOU IN GREAT PAIN?
MMMM... MMM...
HIS FEAR GAVE WAY TO A FEELING OF DEEP COMPASSION WHEN HE SAW THE LOOK OF MUTE APPEAL IN THE GIANT'S PAIN-FILLED EYES.
I CAN STOP THE PAIN.
JANNO HAD A PAIN-KILLING DRUG IN HIS EMERGENCY KIT. HE INJECTED IT INTO THE CREATURE'S VEINS... AND THEN SET TO WORK TO FIX SPLINTS ON THE BROKEN LEG.
MASTERING THEIR FEARS, THE PEOPLE ASSISTED JANNO IN HIS WORK OF MERCY. SOON THE LEG WAS ATTENDED TO AND THE GREAT CREATURE WAS ON HIS FEET.
AAAAGH!
AND THEN, UNBELIEVABLY, JANNO'S HAND WAS GENTLY TAKEN IN THAT MIGHTY FIST!
MAY THE STARS PRESERVE US... ONE SWEEP OF THAT TREE TRUNK AND WE'RE ALL DEAD MEN!
LATER THAT DAY, WORK BEGAN ON REPAIRING THE DAMAGE TO THE TOWN. DESPITE HIS INJURED LEG, THE GIANT ASSISTED.

NO ONE WAS MORE ASTOUNDED THAN OLD ORGO.
I NEVER WOULD HAVE BELIEVED IT! HE WAS ALWAYS LIKE A WILD ANIMAL!
BECAUSE YOU TREATED HIM AS SUCH... KEPT HIM DRUGGED... IN CHAINS! IN FACT, HE IS JUST LIKE ONE OF US... ONLY BIGGER AND MORE PRIMITIVE!
A FEW DAYS AFTER THIS STRANGE ADVENTURE, THE FOUR COMRADES SET OFF TO CONTINUE THEIR LONG JOURNEY TO HERICON.
IF WE HAD FLOWN BY ATMOSTPHERE CRAFT, WE'D HAVE BEEN IN HERICON DAYS AGO!
TRUE ENOUGH, NIKKO... BUT IN THIS WAY YOU ARE SEEING AT CLOSE QUARTERS THE LANDS OVER WHICH, ONE DAY, YOU WILL RULE AS EMPEROR.
PRESENTLY, THEY CAME TO THE SHORE OF THE GREAT OCEAN.
WE'LL BUY PASSAGE TO HERICON ON THAT SHIP AT THE QUAY.
THE SURLY CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP GLANCED SHREWDLY AT THE RICH TRAPPINGS OF THE FOUR YOUTHS... AND DOUBLED THE PRICE FOR THEIR JOURNEY!
TO HERICON? TWENTY PIECES EACH!
YOU DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN, MY FRIEND, BUT... AGREED!
WHEN THE PASSENGERS HAD GONE BELOW, THE CAPTAIN MUTTERED TO HIS MATE.
TRIGAN OFFICERS, THEY ARE... WE'RE IN LUCK THIS TIME!
THEY PUT TO SEA AT SUNSET AND JANNO WAS SOON ASLEEP. SOME TIME LATER...
HEH! THE NEAREST THOSE YOUNG SPRIGS WILL GET TO HERICON WILL BE THE BOTTOM OF THE GREAT OCEAN!
JANNO WOKE WITH A START AS THEY LAID HANDS ON HIM. HE KICKED OUT WITH BOTH FEET. ONE OF HIS ASSAILANTS TOPPLED BACK, UPSETTING THE LAMP...
BY ALL THE DEMONS... WE'RE AFIRE!
AAAAAAAAAH!

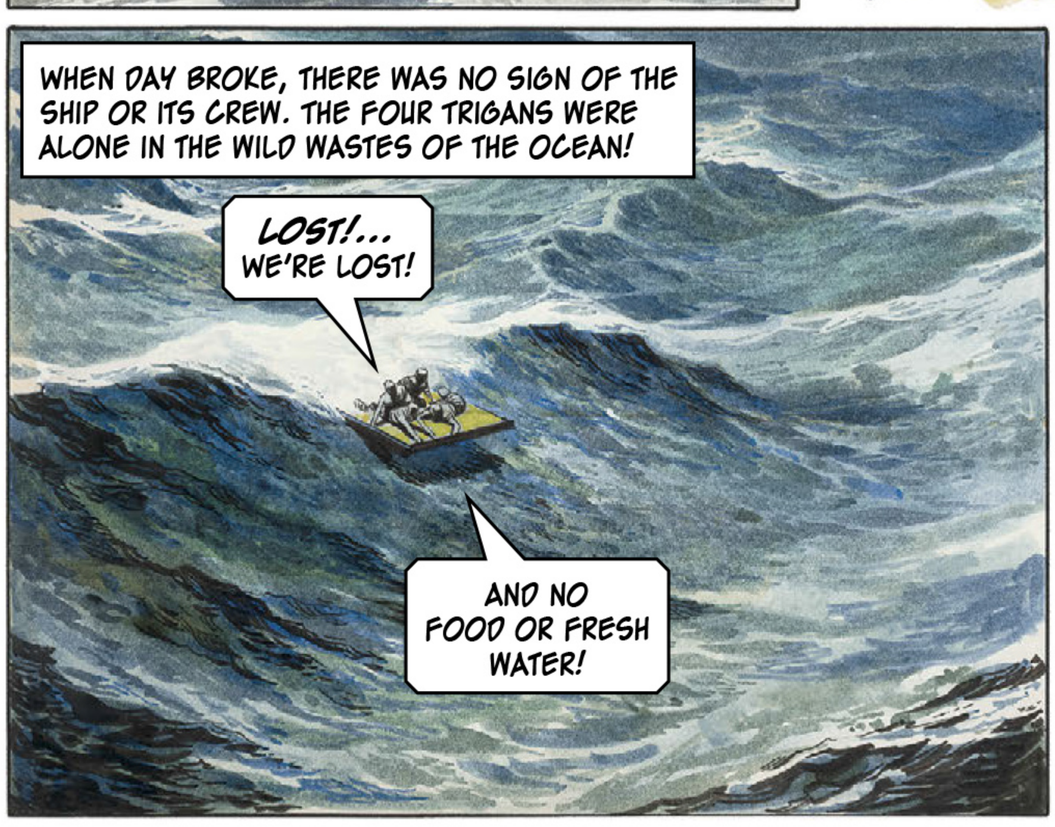
WITHIN INSTANTS, THE CABIN WAS AN INFERNO AS THE BLAZING OIL SET FIRE TO THE DRY TIMBERS.
AAAAGH! IT'S OUT OF CONTROL! FIRE! FIRE!

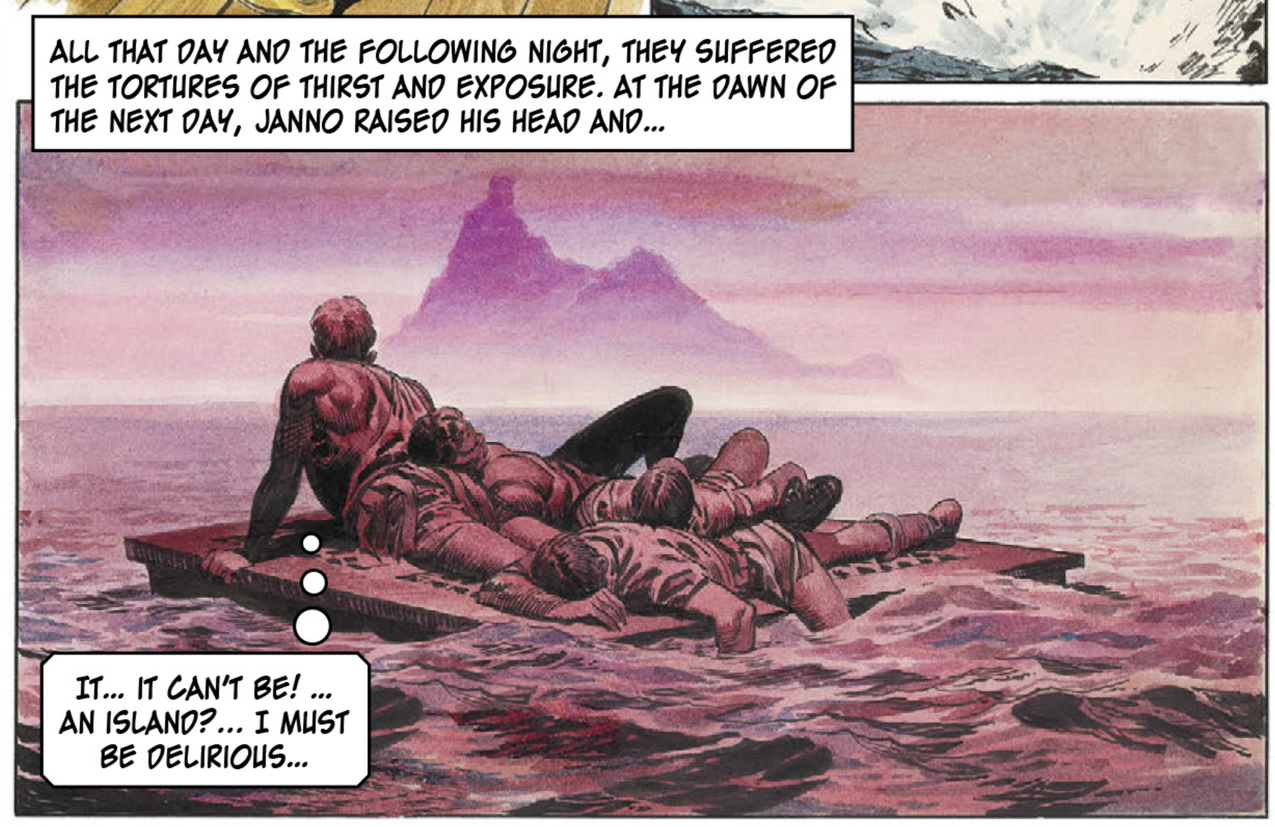
IN LESS TIME THAN IT TAKES TO TELL, THE SHIP WAS A FLOATING TORCH!

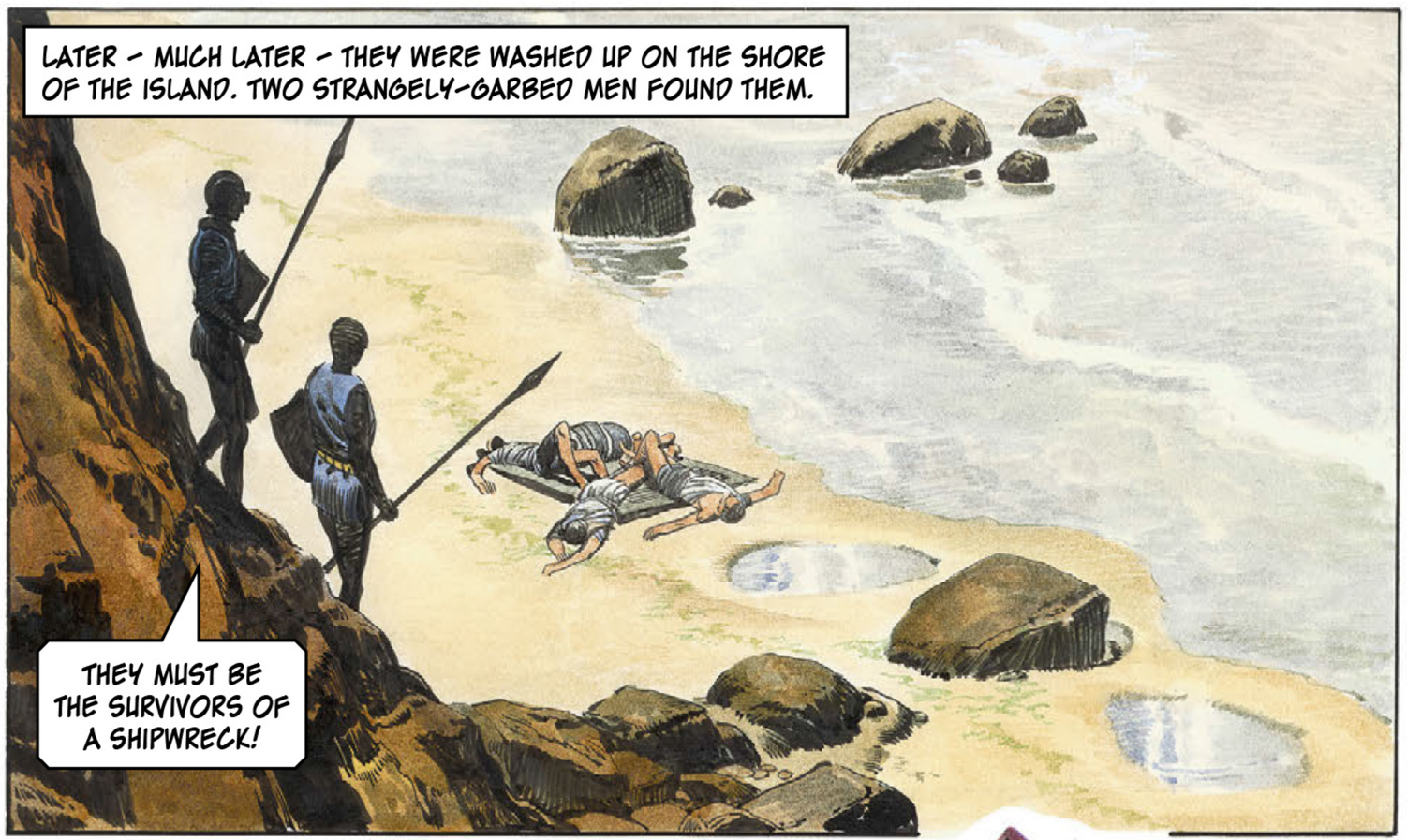
THE UNDISCIPLINED CREW FOUGHT EACH OTHER AS THEY LOWERED THE ONLY BOAT... WHICH TOPPLED INTO THE SEA UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THEIR BODIES.
AAAAAAH! EEEEEEEH!

JANNO AND HIS COMRADES REACHED THE STERN OF THE DOOMED SHIP UNMOLESTED.
GET THIS OVER THE SIDE... IT COULD BE OUR ONLY CHANCE OF SURVIVAL!

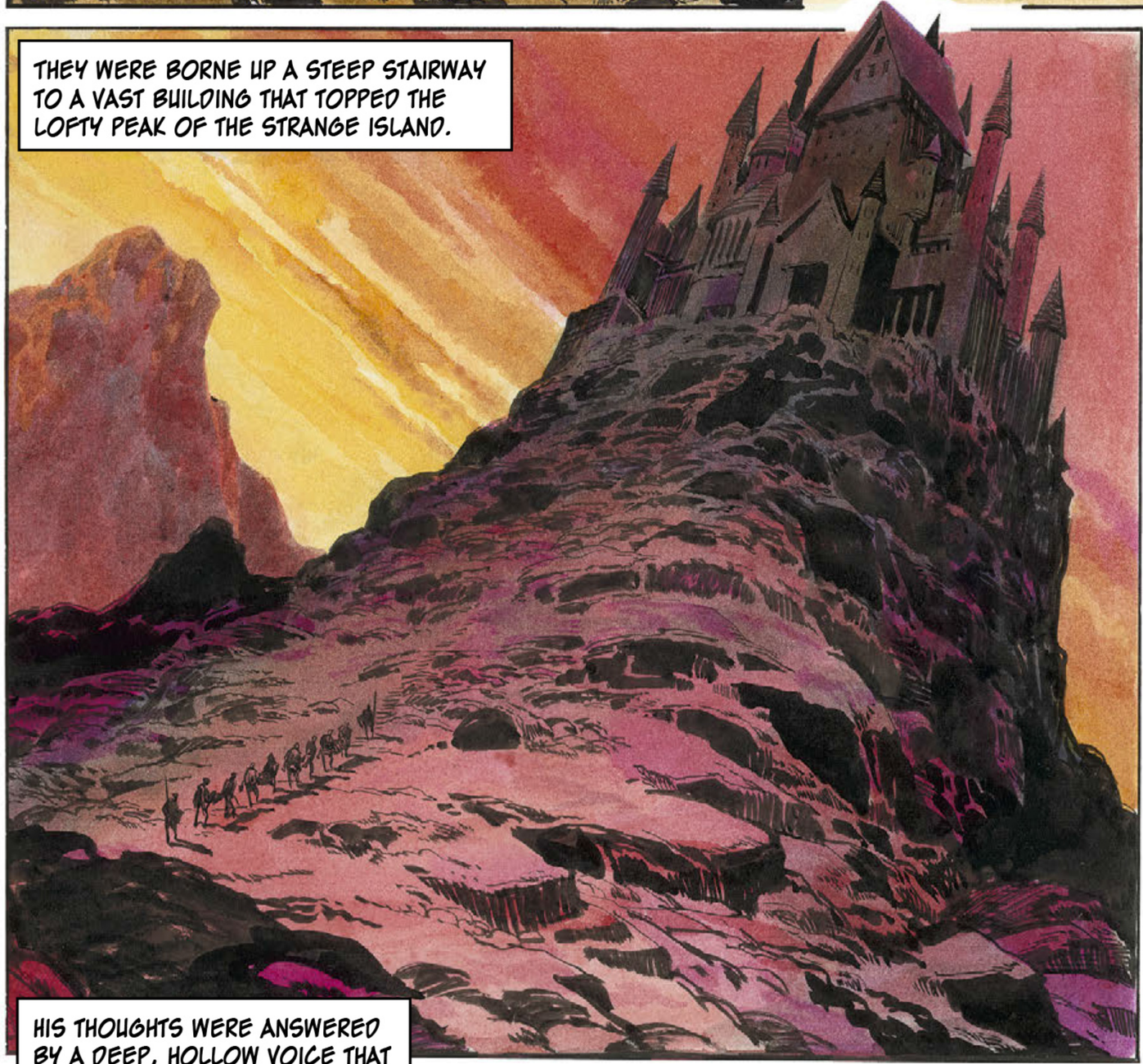
ONE BY ONE, THEY PLUNGED INTO THE CHILL WATERS OF THE GREAT OCEAN.


WHEN DAY BROKE, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE SHIP OR ITS CREW. THE FOUR TRIGANS WERE ALONE IN THE WILD WASTES OF THE OCEAN!
LOST!... WE'RE LOST!
AND NO FOOD OR FRESH WATER!


ALL THAT DAY AND THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, THEY SUFFERED THE TORTURES OF THIRST AND EXPOSURE. AT THE DAWN OF THE NEXT DAY, JANNO RAISED HIS HEAD AND...
IT... IT CAN'T BE! ... AN ISLAND?... I MUST BE DELIRIOUS...

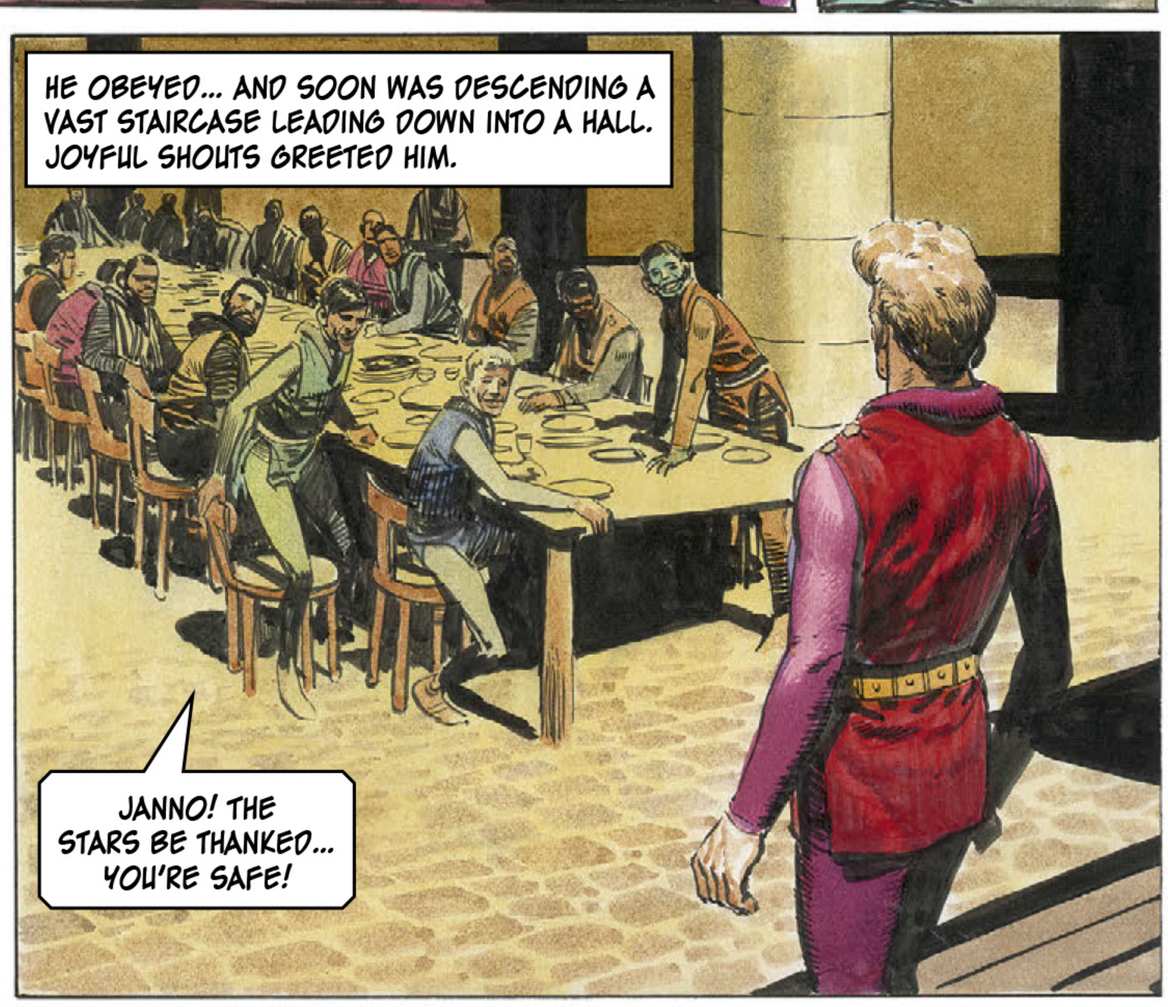

LATER – MUCH LATER – THEY WERE WASHED UP ON THE SHORE OF THE ISLAND. TWO STRANGELY-GARBED MEN FOUND THEM.
THEY MUST BE THE SURVIVORS OF A SHIPWRECK!

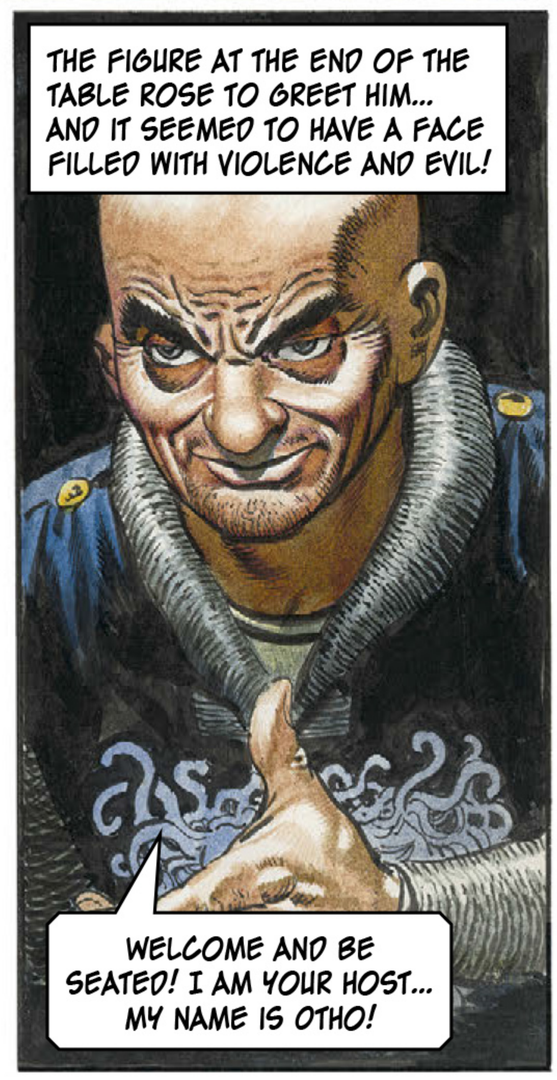
THE MASTER WILL BE HIGHLY PLEASED! NOT FOR A LONG TIME HAS THE OCEAN DELIVERED UP FOUR SUCH STALWART VICTIMS!


THEY WERE BORNE UP A STEEP STAIRWAY TO A VAST BUILDING THAT TOPPED THE LOFTY PEAK OF THE STRANGE ISLAND.

JANNO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AT NIGHTFALL, TO FIND HIMSELF IN A RICHLY-FURNISHED BEDCHAMBER.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE...? AM I STILL ALIVE...?

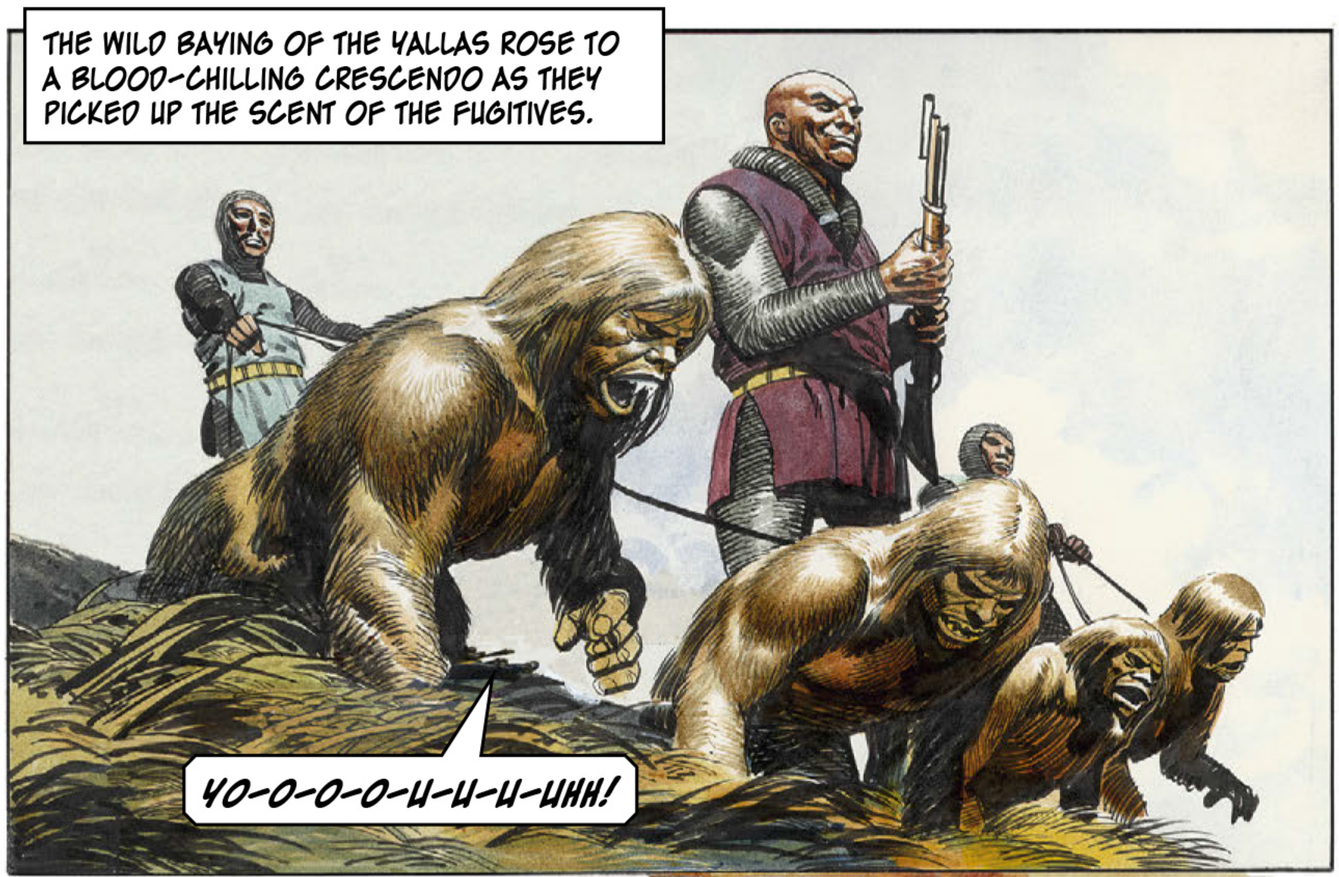
HIS THOUGHTS WERE ANSWERED BY A DEEP, HOLLOW VOICE THAT EMERGED FROM THE MOUTH OF THE HUGE STATUE.
ARISE! DRESS YOURSELF IN THE GARB WHICH HAS BEEN LAID OUT FOR YOU... AND DESCEND TO THE GREAT HALL!

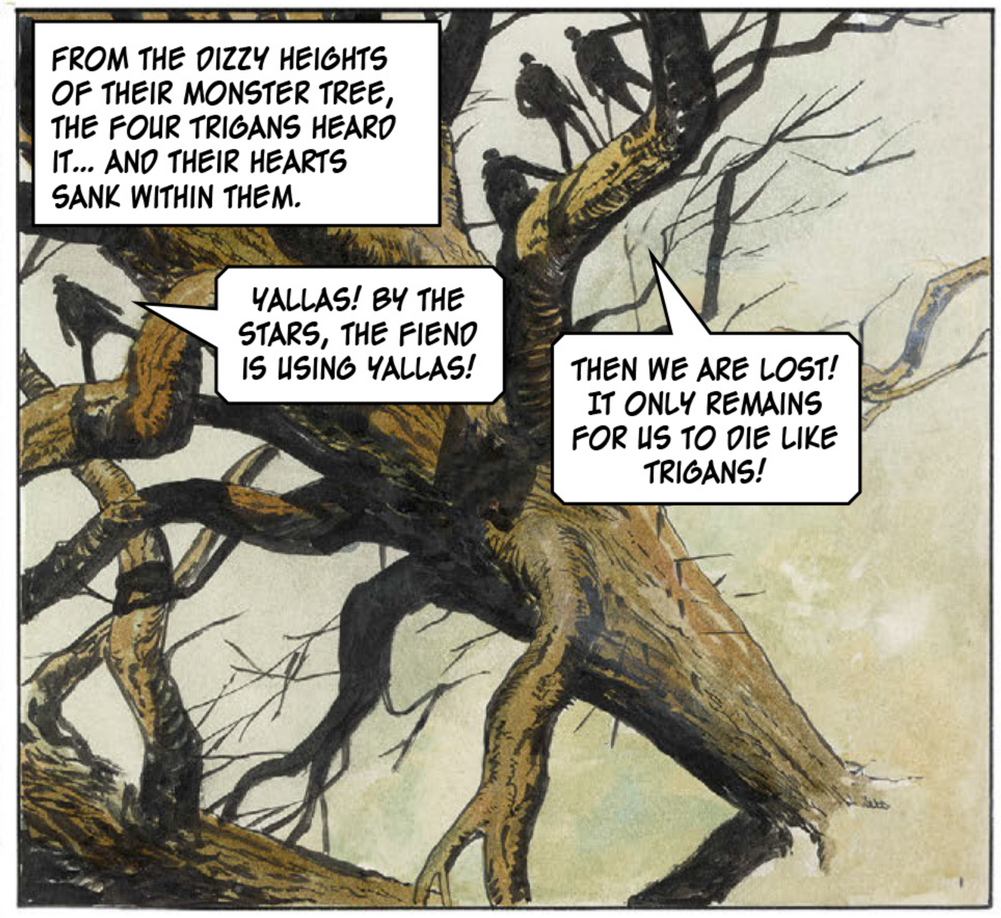

HE OBEYED... AND SOON WAS DESCENDING A VAST STAIRCASE LEADING DOWN INTO A HALL. JOYFUL SHOUTS GREETED HIM.
JANNO! THE STARS BE THANKED... YOU'RE SAFE!


THE FIGURE AT THE END OF THE TABLE ROSE TO GREET HIM... AND IT SEEMED TO HAVE A FACE FILLED WITH VIOLENCE AND EVIL!
WELCOME AND BE SEATED! I AM YOUR HOST... MY NAME IS OTHO!

FAMISHED AFTER THEIR TERRIBLE ORDEAL, THE FOUR TRIGANS DEVOURED EVERYTHING THAT WAS SET BEFORE THEM... AND THEN...
YOU HAVE EATEN YOUR FILL, MY FRIENDS? GOOD! EXCELLENT!
THEIR HOST'S NEXT WORDS SENT SHOCKS OF ALARM THROUGH THEIR VEINS!
IT WILL BE THE LAST MEAL YOU WILL EVER EAT!
FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, JANNO SAW A GROUP OF BRUTISH ARMED GUARDS ENTERING THE HALL. HE TENSED HIMSELF FOR ACTION...
AND THEN...
ON YOUR FEET, TRIGANS! PREPARE TO FIGHT FOR YOUR LIVES!
PRINCE NIKKO STRUCK THE FIRST BLOW.
STRIKE WITH THE FLAT OF YOUR SWORD BLADES! DON'T KILL THEM!
UHHHH!

THE TRIGANS WERE DRAGGED TO THEIR FEET TO FACE THE EVILLY-GLOATING OTHO.
EXCELLENT! I AM GLAD THAT YOU HAVE PLENTY OF FIGHTING SPIRIT. YOU WILL PROVIDE ME WITH GOOD SPORT!
MY WHOLE LIFE IS DEVOTED TO THE SPORT OF HUNTING. THE ISLAND TEEMS WITH CUNNING AND FEROCIOUS GAME BUT I HAVE FOUND NO ANIMAL THAT GIVES ME BETTER SPORT THAN MAN... SO I AM A HUNTER OF MEN!
GO NOW! YOU HAVE THIS SWORD BETWEEN YOU. THE WHOLE ISLAND IS THE HUNTING GROUND AND YOU HAVE ALL NIGHT TO MAKE A PLAN OF DEFENCE...
AT DAWN, YOU WILL HEAR THE SOUND OF A HUNTING HORN... THAT WILL BE THE SIGNAL TO TELL YOU THAT I AM SETTING OUT ON YOUR TRAIL. IF YOU ARE STILL ALIVE BY SUNSET, YOU CAN GO FREE... BUT NO MAN HAS EVER ESCAPED ME YET!
AND SO THE FOUR SET OFF IN THE DARKNESS... AND WERE SOON SCRAMBLING OVER THE THICKLY-WOODED SLOPES OF THE ISLAND.
WE HAVEN'T LONG... THE NIGHT'S MORE THAN HALF GONE!
DAWN FOUND THEM ON THE TOPMOST BRANCHES OF ONE OF THE MASSIVE TREES. THEY HAD FASHIONED A SMALL ARSENAL OF SHARPENED STAKES...
THIS IS OUR ONLY HOPE. WE'LL DEFEND THIS TREE TILL THE END... AND GO DOWN FIGHTING LIKE TRIGANS SHOULD!
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW!
THEN THE SPINE-CHILLING NOTE OF A GREAT HUNTING HORN RANG OUT FROM THE RAMPARTS OF OTHO'S CASTLE.
AND OTHO SET FORTH ON THE HUNT. WITH HIM WERE FOUR SNARLING YALLAS... THE DEADY HUNTING-BEASTS OF ELEKTON.


THE WILD BAYING OF THE YALLAS ROSE TO A BLOOD-CHILLING CRESCENDO AS THEY PICKED UP THE SCENT OF THE FUGITIVES.
YO-O-O-O-O-U-U-U-UHH!


FROM THE DIZZY HEIGHTS OF THEIR MONSTER TREE, THE FOUR TRIGANS HEARD IT... AND THEIR HEARTS SANK WITHIN THEM.
YALLAS! BY THE STARS, THE FIEND IS USING YALLAS!
THEN WE ARE LOST! IT ONLY REMAINS FOR US TO DIE LIKE TRIGANS!

THE HUNTING-BEASTS LED THEIR MASTER STRAIGHT TO THE BASE OF THE TREE.
THEY MUST BE UP THERE! YES... I SEE THEM!

HIS GUN BELCHED FLAME...

THE TRIGANS THREW THEMSELVES PRONE ON THE BROAD BRANCH AS THE SHELLS TORE INTO THE WOOD ALL ROUND THEM!

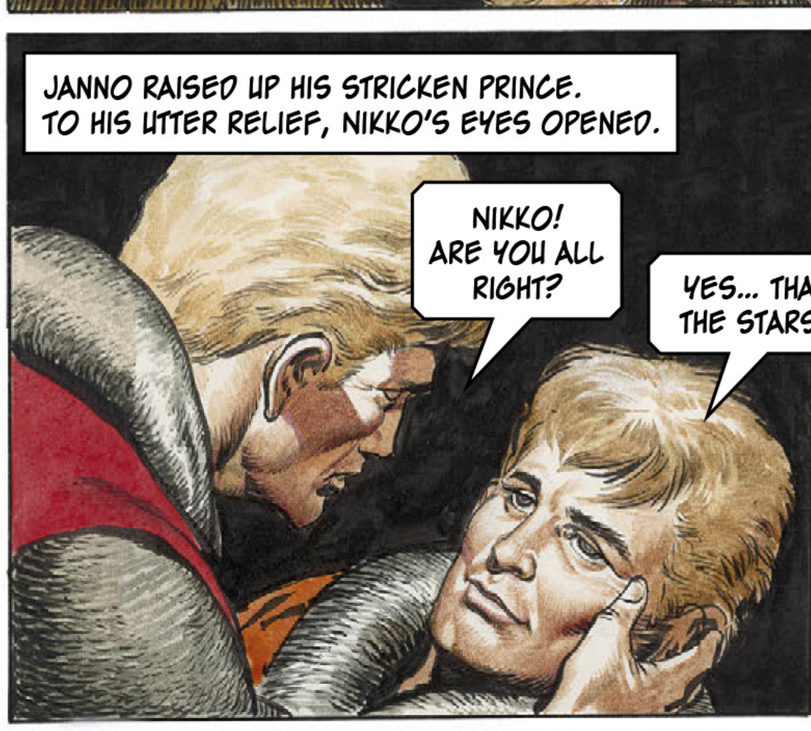
WHEN THE FIRING SLACKENED, THEY LEAPT TO THEIR FEET... AND HURLED DOWN THEIR SHARPENED STAKES!

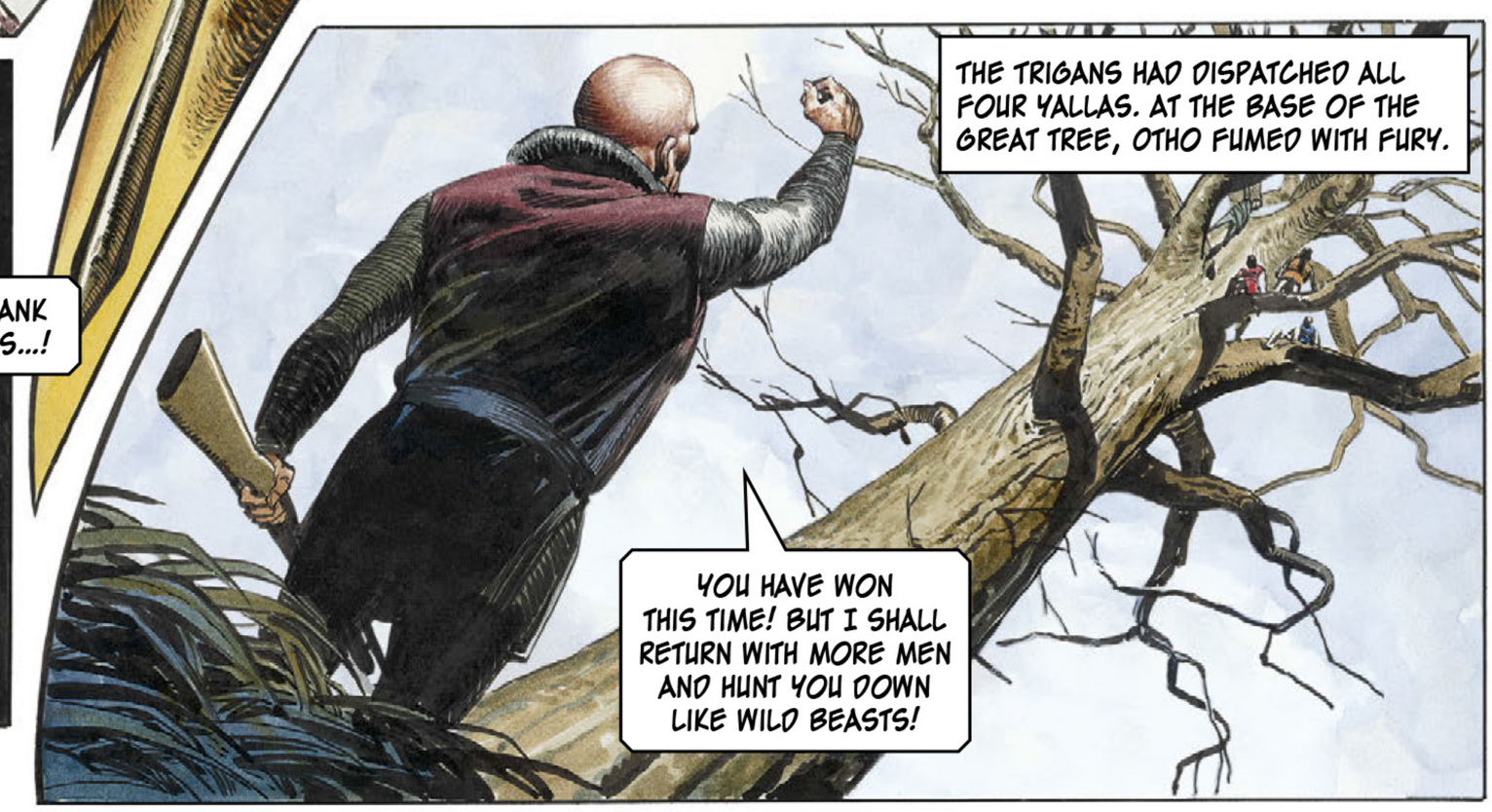
ONE OF OTHO'S BRUTISH GUARDS FELL TO A MAKESHIFT LANCE... AND THE SINISTER HUNTER LEAPT FOR COVER.
RELEASE THE YALLAS! LET THEM DEAL WITH THE DEMONS!

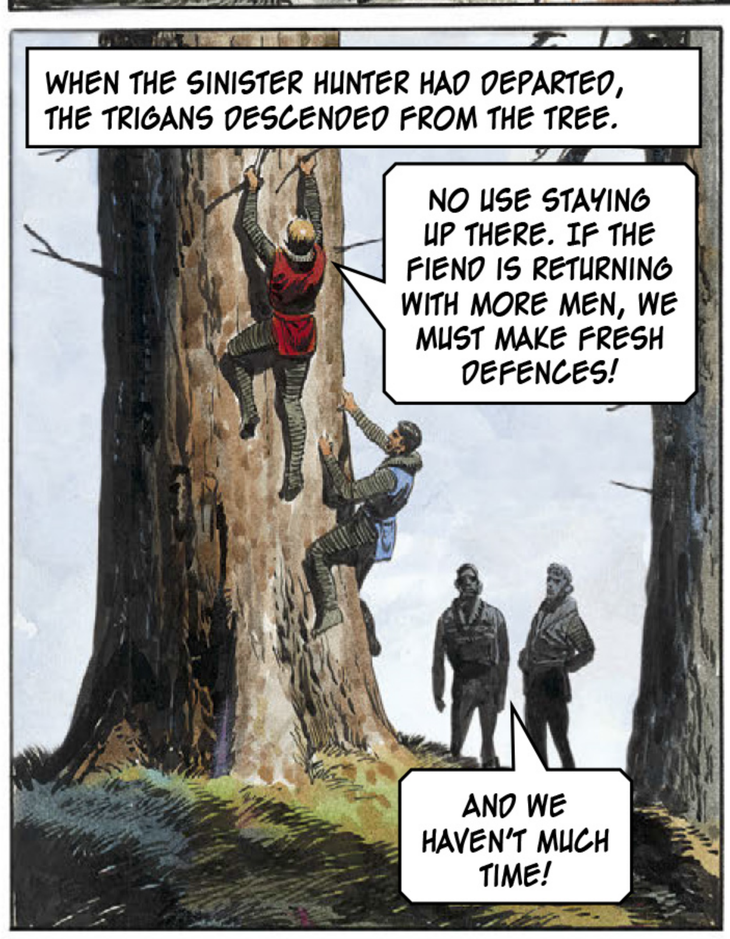
AND SO, THE TERRIBLE HUNTING-BEASTS OF ELEKTON WERE FREED TO DEAL WITH THE PREY...
THE TRIGANS MET THE MONSTERS WITH SWORD AND LANCES.
KEEP THEM BACK AT ALL COSTS!
RA-A-A-AAAH!
A BLOW OF A TALONED PAW SENT PRINCE NIKKO REELING BACK...
AAAAAAAAH!
...TO FALL HEADLONG!
EEEEEEEEEEEH!
MOMENTS LATER, JANNO PAUSED IN HIS EFFORTS... AND LOOKED DOWN TO SEE THE PRINCE OF TRIGAN SPRAWLED SENSELESS ON A LOWER BRANCH WITH A YALLA ABOUT TO DISPATCH HIM!
NIKKO!
WITHOUT HESITATION, JANNO LEAPT FOR A TRAILING BRANCH... AND SWUNG LOW...
HE EXTENDED HIS BOOTED FEET TO STRIKE THE YALLA AND SEND IT TOPPLING TO DESTRUCTION... BUT AN INSTANT BEFORE IMPACT THE BEAST TURNED...
YO-O-O-O-O-U-U-HH!
...AND HE WAS BEING CARRIED STRAIGHT TOWARDS THOSE GAPING JAWS!

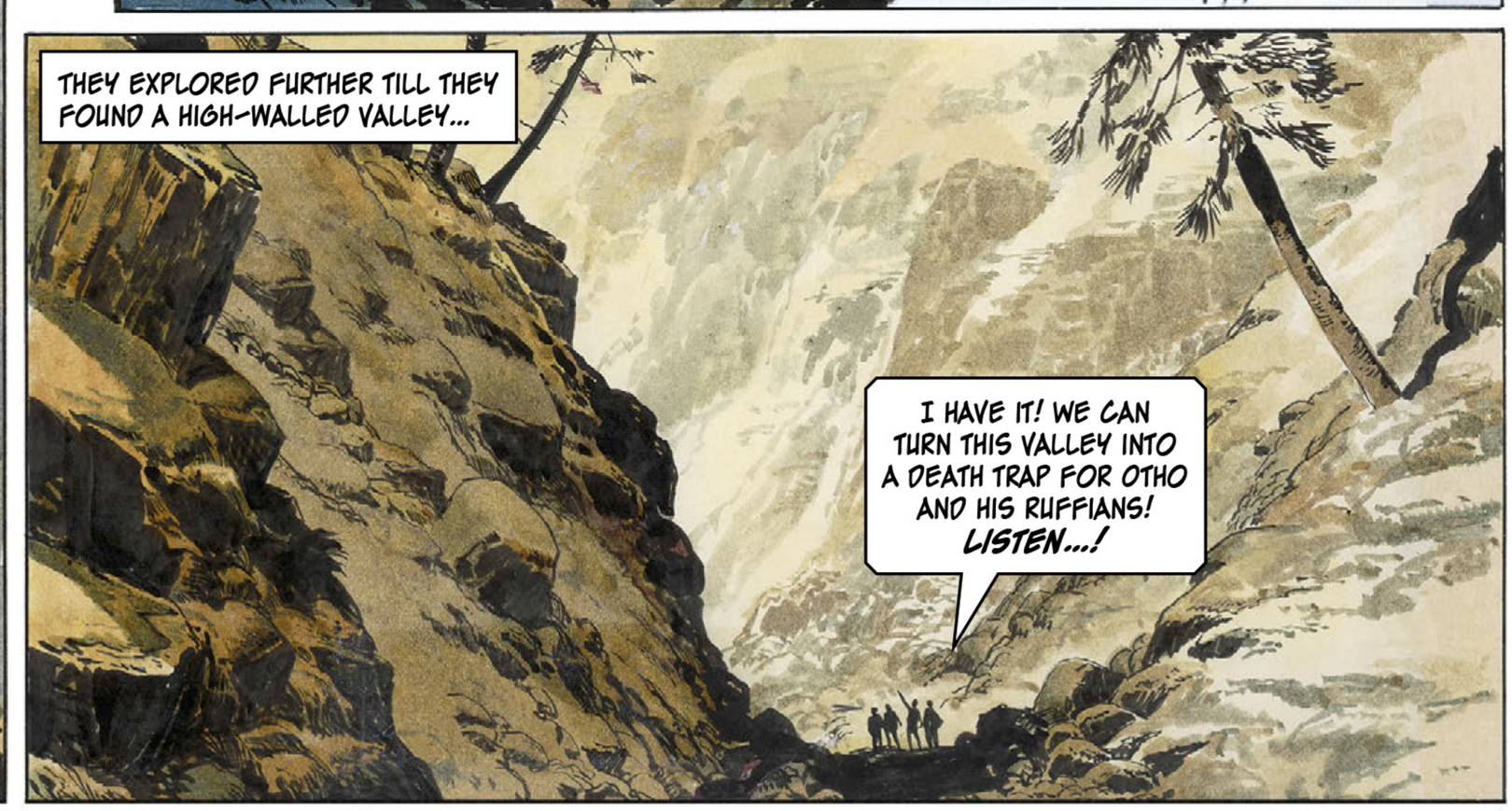
AS JANNO SWUNG HELPLESSLY TOWARDS IT, THE YALLA SEIZED HIS LEGS... THE SNARLING FANGS OPENED WIDE TO SAVAGE HIM...

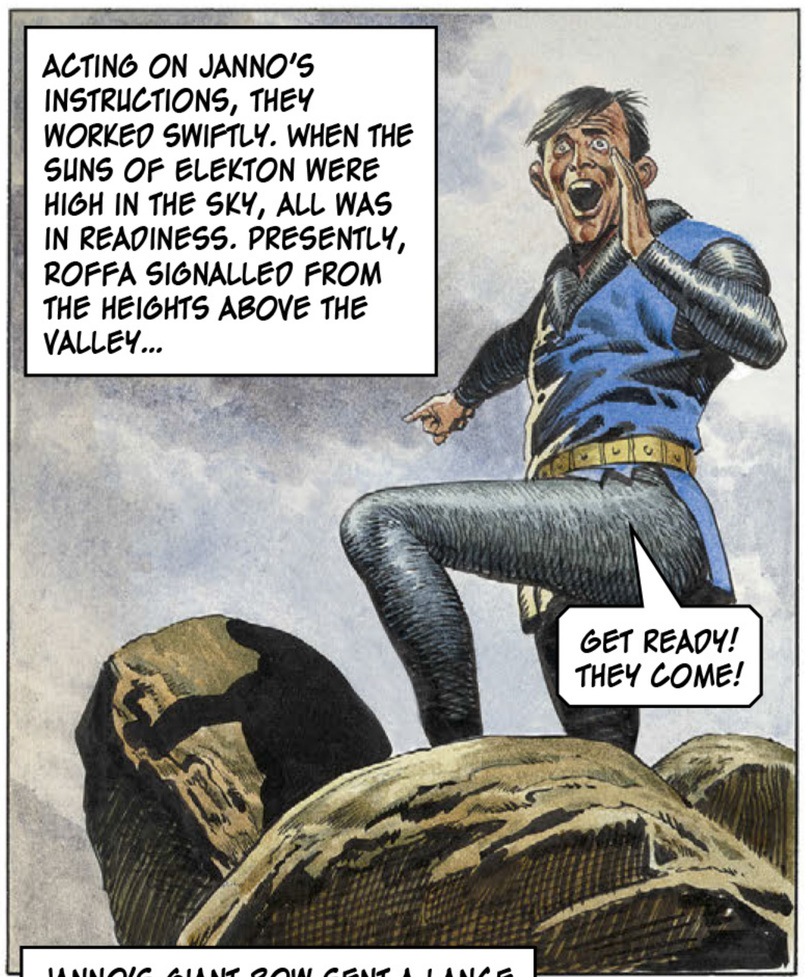
ROFFA SAW IT ALL FROM THE BRANCH ABOVE... HE HURLED ONE OF THE MAKESHIFT LANCES...
...AND SAVED HIS COMRADES!


JANNO RAISED UP HIS STRICKEN PRINCE. TO HIS UTTER RELIEF, NIKKO'S EYES OPENED.
NIKKO! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES... THANK THE STARS...!

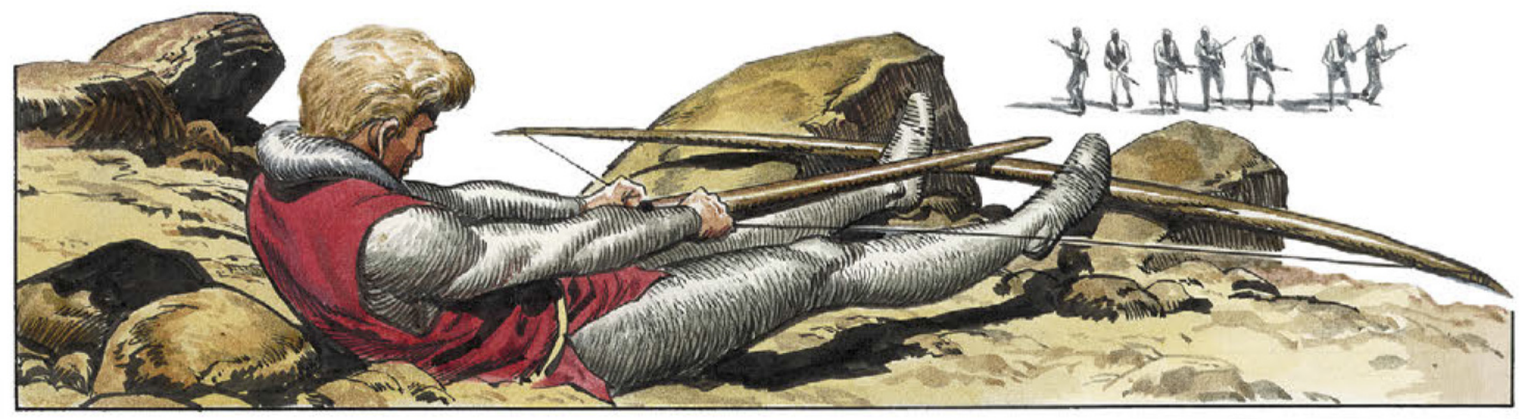

THE TRIGANS HAD DISPATCHED ALL FOUR YALLAS. AT THE BASE OF THE GREAT TREE, OTHO FUMED WITH FURY.
YOU HAVE WON THIS TIME! BUT I SHALL RETURN WITH MORE MEN AND HUNT YOU DOWN LIKE WILD BEASTS!


WHEN THE SINISTER HUNTER HAD DEPARTED, THE TRIGANS DESCENDED FROM THE TREE.
NO USE STAYING UP THERE. IF THE FIEND IS RETURNING WITH MORE MEN, WE MUST MAKE FRESH DEFENCES!
AND WE HAVEN'T MUCH TIME!


THEY EXPLORED FURTHER TILL THEY FOUND A HIGH-WALLED VALLEY...
I HAVE IT! WE CAN TURN THIS VALLEY INTO A DEATH TRAP FOR OTHO AND HIS RUFFIANS! LISTEN...!


ACTING ON JANNO'S INSTRUCTIONS, THEY WORKED SWIFTLY. WHEN THE SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE HIGH IN THE SKY, ALL WAS IN READINESS. PRESENTLY, ROFFA SIGNALLED FROM THE HEIGHTS ABOVE THE VALLEY...
GET READY! THEY COME!

OTHO WALKED CAUTIOUSLY INTO THE VALLEY, FLANKED BY SIX OF HIS BRUTISH GUARDS, ALL ARMED...
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR TRICKERY... THESE TRIGANS ARE WARLIKE AND CUNNING!



JANNO'S GIANT BOW SENT A LANCE SLASHING TOWARDS ITS MARK!
UUUUUUGH!
THERE HE IS... SHOOT HIM!

AND THEN, ON THE HEIGHTS ABOVE...

...AN AVALANCHE CAME CRASHING DOWN UPON THE HUNTERS!
OTHO AND HIS SURVIVING HENCHMEN RACED OUT OF THAT FATAL VALLEY. NOT TILL HE WAS SAFELY CLEAR DID THE MASTER OF THE STRANGE ISLAND PAUSE TO SCREAM BACK HIS TERRIBLE THREAT...
AGAIN YOU HAVE BEATEN ME! BUT NEXT TIME I SHALL RETURN WITH A WEAPON OF DESTRUCTION THAT WILL BLAST YOU FROM THE FACE OF ELEKTON!

SOME TIME LATER, OTHO STREAKED OUT OF A TUNNEL BENEATH HIS STRONGHOLD... ASTRIDE A DEADLY-LOOKING CRAFT!
HIGH ABOVE HIS SINISTER ISLAND, HE SEARCHED FOR HIS VICTIMS...
ONE WELL-AIMED BLAST WILL WIPE THEM FROM THE FACE OF ELEKTON!
THE FOUR TRIGANS WERE HIDING AMONG THE TUMBLED ROCKS ON A BEACH.
THERE HE IS!
BY THE STARS! THE FIEND IS TAKING NO CHANCES THIS TIME!
IF HE SIGHTS US WE'RE DONE FOR!
YES, BUT THERE'S A CHANCE... JUST ONE CHANCE!
WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
JANNO WRIGGLED OUT OF HIS TUNIC AND BEGAN STUFFING IT WITH PEBBLES...
I'M MAKING A DUMMY FIGURE TO LURE HIM DOWN... PASS ME A ROCK ABOUT THE SIZE OF A HEAD...
A FEW MOMENTS LATER, OTHO SAW... IT!
ONE OF THE TRIGANS!
HE CAME DOWN IN A SCREAMING DIVE, CANNONS BLASTING!

AS THE DART-CRAFT FLASHED OVERHEAD, JANNO TOOK AIM... AND LOOSED HIS GIANT BOW!
IF IT HITS THE CONTROL SURFACES IT MIGHT BRING HIM DOWN... IF IT MISSES, WE'RE LOST!
IT MISSED!
HA! YOU HAVE DELIVERED YOURSELVES UP TO DESTRUCTION, TRIGANS!
OTHO BROUGHT HIS CRAFT ROUND IN A BREATHTAKING TURN AND...
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
THEN, SUDDENLY, A MONSTROUS FORM AROSE FROM THE SURFACE OF THE SEA!
AAAAGH!
GIANT TENTACLES WHIPPED OUT AND TOOK THE DART-CRAFT IN A DEATH GRIP.
JANNO SAW THEIR ENEMY STRIKE THE WATER AND REAPPEAR... HE SAW THE GROPING TENTACLES...
COME ON! WE CAN'T LEAVE HIM TO SUCH AN AWFUL FATE!
AAAAAAAAH!
THE TRIGANS FORMED A LIVING CHAIN. JANNO'S HAND REACHED OUT TO GRAB THE PANIC-STRICKEN MAN... JUST AS HE WAS SEIZED IN THE MONSTER'S GRASP!

OTHO'S WRIST SLIPPED FROM JANNO'S CLUTCH AND, WITH A DESPAIRING CRY, HE WAS DRAGGED INTO THE DEPTHS.
AAAAAAAAAAH!
THE TRIGANS WERE POWERLESS TO HELP...
HE HUNTED MEN FOR SPORT... NOW HE HAS MET HIS FATE!
EVIL THOUGH HE WAS, I WOULD NOT HAVE WISHED HIM SUCH AN END.
THERE WAS NO SIGN OF OTHO'S EVIL GUARDS WHEN THEY REACHED THE ISLAND'S HARBOUR.
THAT CRAFT WILL CARRY US TO HERICON.
LET US GET AWAY BEFORE THE GUARDS LEARN WHAT HAS HAPPENED.
SOON THEY WERE SPEEDING AWAY FROM THE NIGHTMARE ISLAND.
THERE WAS TRANSMITTING GEAR ABOARD THE CRAFT AND A MESSAGE WAS FLASHED ACROSS THE GREAT OCEAN...
CALLING HERICON... CALLING HERICON... PRINCE NIKKO OF TRIGAN IS ON HIS WAY AND WILL ARRIVE TOMORROW...
THE MESSAGE WAS TAKEN STRAIGHT TO THE COUNCIL OF REGENTS, WHO HAD RULED HERICON SINCE THE TRAGIC DEATH OF KING KASSAR.
SO, MY FRIENDS, OUR NEW KING IS ON HIS WAY... AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS!
NACHA, CHIEF REGENT OF HERICON, EYED THE CIRCLE OF UNEASY FACES.
YOU, TRIKK, HAVE PLUNDERED THE NATIONAL TREASURY. AND YOU, URGA, HAVE GROWN RICH BY TAXING THE POOR. I, TOO, AM GUILTY... WE ARE DONE FOR!

WE COULD COVER UP OUR TRACKS...
MEN CAN BE BRIBED TO SILENCE...

FOOLS! FOOLS! HE'S TRIGO'S SON, ISN'T HE? DO YOU THINK A VIGOROUS YOUNG PRINCE OF THE HOUSE OF TRIGAN WON'T SWIFTLY DISCOVER WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING HERE... AND EXECUTE THE LOT OF US?

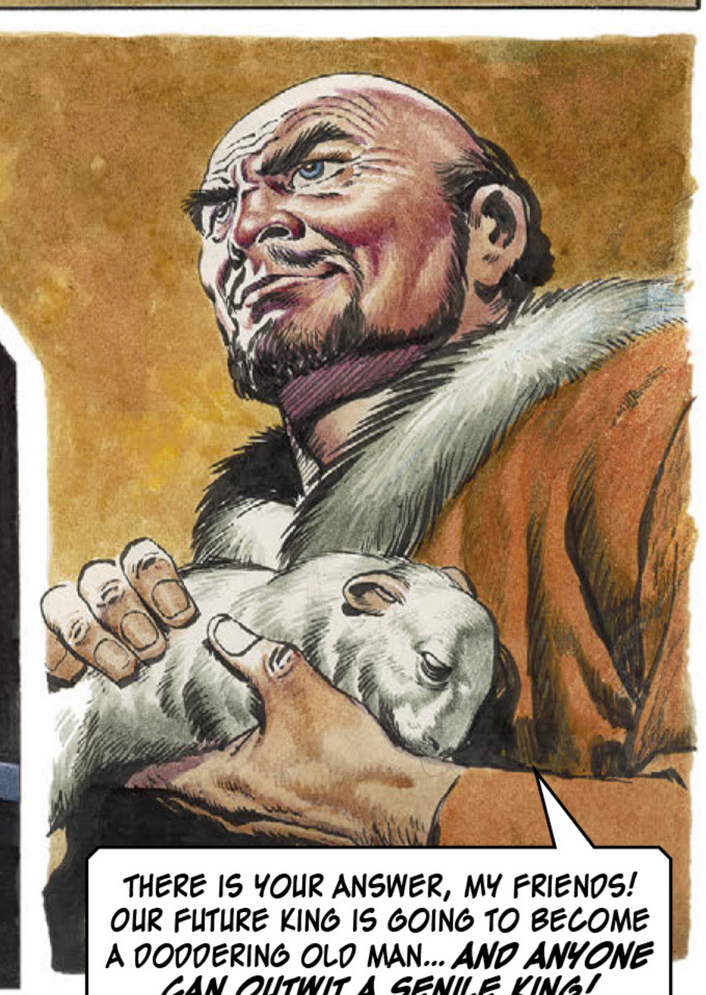
NOT SO! THERE IS A WAY OUT! ENTER, ZOGG!

ZOGG WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST SCIENTISTS ON ELEKTON.
ALL IS READY, MY LORD.
GOOD! PROCEED WITH THE EXPERIMENT.

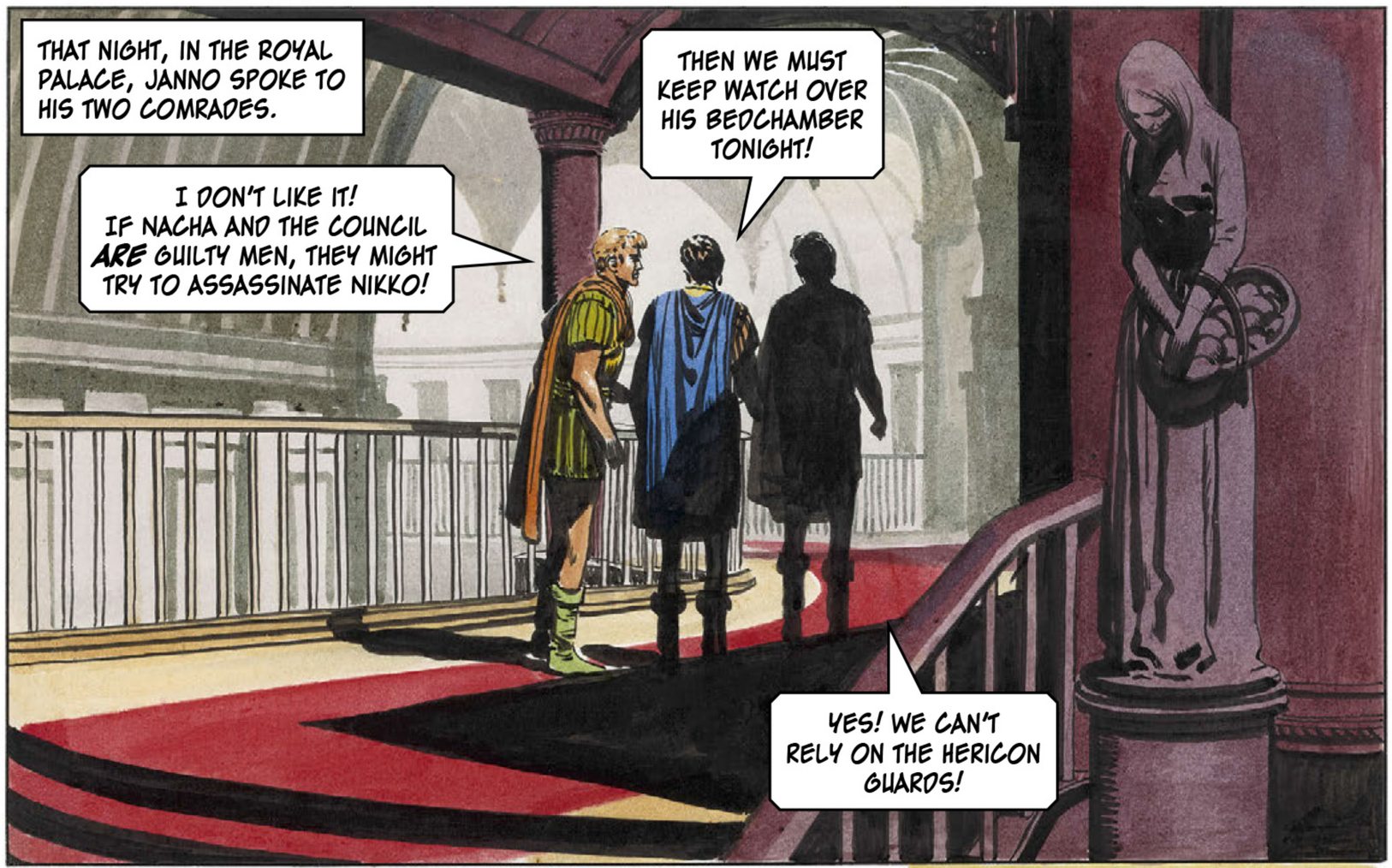
MY LORDS, YOU WILL OBSERVE THAT THIS IS A YOUNG ROBBIS, IN EXCELLENT HEALTH WITH DARK BROWN HAIR AND BRIGHT EYES. NOW... WATCH CLOSELY...

HE TOUCHED A LEVER. A FAINT HUMMING NOTE EMERGED FROM THE STRANGE DEVICE... AND SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THE ROBBIS!
BY THE STARS... IT HAS TURNED WHITE!
WHITE WITH AGE, MY LORDS! THE CREATURE HAS BECOME SENILE!

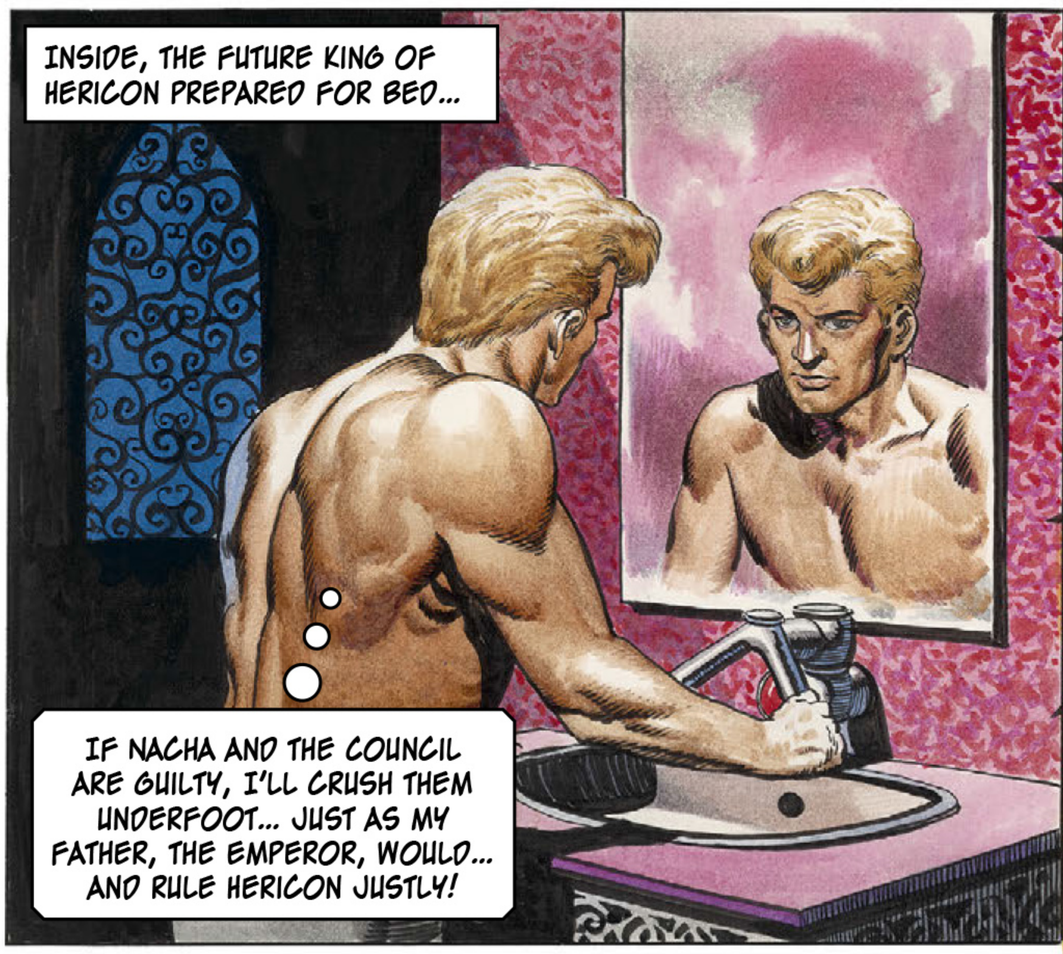
AND WITH THIS SAME SCIENTIFIC DEVICE, YOU CAN ALSO TURN A VIGOROUS YOUNG MAN INTO A WHITE-HAIRED DOTARD?
YES, YES, MY LORD! THAT WOULD BE QUITE SIMPLE!


THERE IS YOUR ANSWER, MY FRIENDS! OUR FUTURE KING IS GOING TO BECOME A DODDERING OLD MAN... AND ANYONE CAN OUTWIT A SENILE KING!

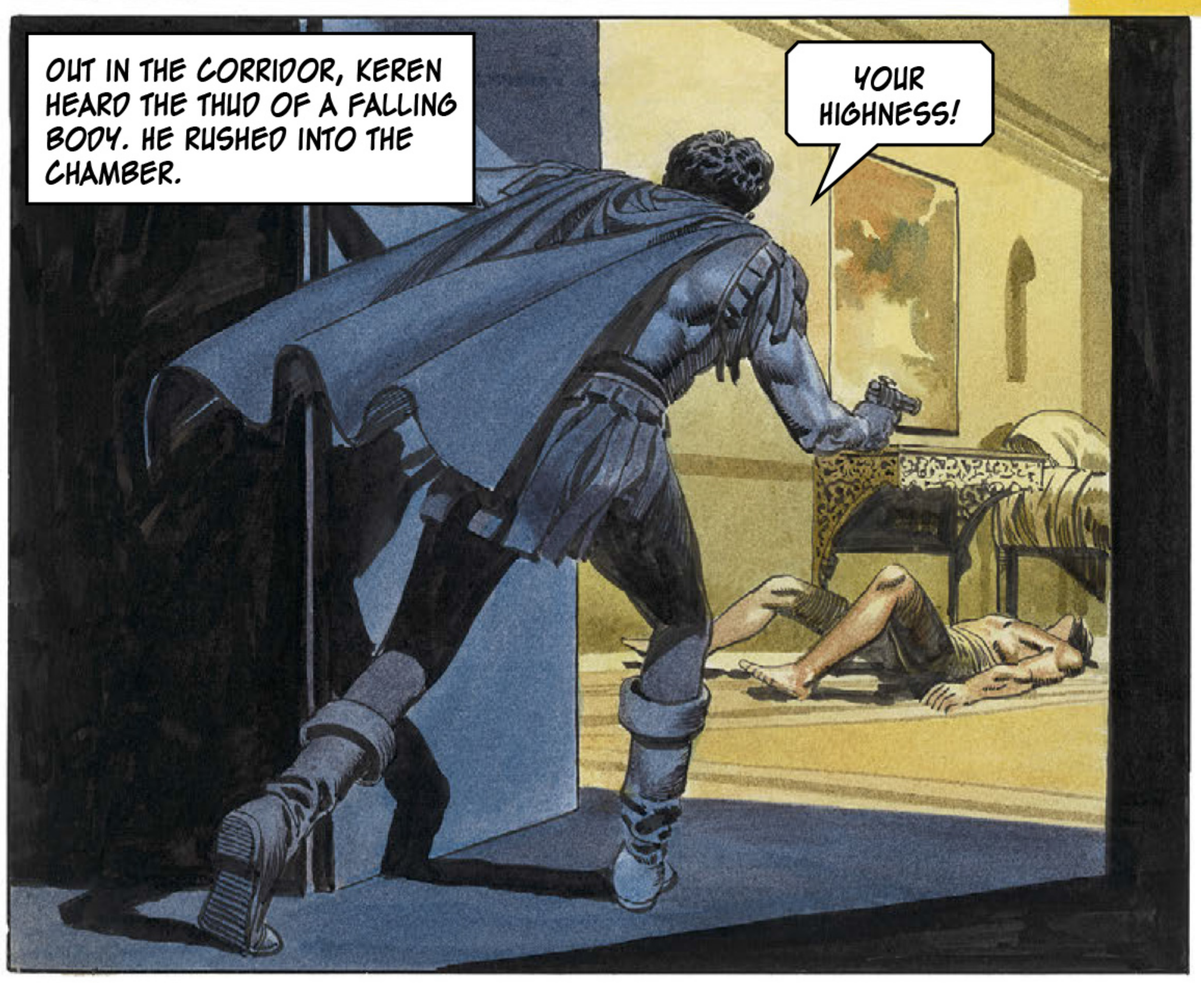
AMIDST GREAT POMP, NIKKO AND HIS COMRADES STEPPED ASHORE AT HERICON CITY... TO BE GREETED BY NACHA AND THE COUNCIL.
YOUR HIGHNESS! ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF HERICON, I GREET YOU!
I THANK YOU!
SUDDENLY, A POORLY-CLAD FIGURE BURST THROUGH THE GUARDS AND THREW HIMSELF AT NIKKO'S FEET.
HIGHNESS! THANK THE STARS YOU HAVE COME TO SAVE US!
FROM WHAT, OLD ONE?
A FINGER WAS POINTED ACCUSINGLY AT THE CHIEF REGENT AND HIS ACCOMPLICES.
NACHA AND THE COUNCIL! EVER SINCE THE DEATH OF GOOD KING KASSAR, THEY HAVE ROBBED AND ILL-TREATED THE PEOPLE OF OUR LAND!
MY HUSBAND WAS THROWN INTO PRISON FOR REFUSING TO GIVE ALL HIS WAGES TO THE TAX COLLECTOR!
MY LAND WAS STOLEN FROM ME BY NACHA!
WHEN NACHA SPOKE, HIS VOICE WAS SMOOTH AND ASSURED.
YOUR HIGHNESS... SURELY YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THE BABBLINGS OF THESE IGNORANT PEOPLE?
INDEED NO, NACHA... NOT WITHOUT PROOF!
THE MATTER IS CLOSED... UNTIL TOMORROW! TOMORROW, YOU WILL CALL A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF REGENTS... AND I SHALL REQUIRE TO SEE FULL DETAILS OF HOW YOU HAVE RULED THIS COUNTRY SINCE KING KASSAR'S DEATH!
NIKKO WENT ON HIS WAY... LEAVING THE COUNCIL MEMBERS STARING AFTER HIM IN ALARM.
WE ARE DOOMED!
TOMORROW HE WILL LEARN EVERYTHING!
OH NO HE WILL NOT!
TONIGHT, WE STRIKE! ZOGG'S DEVICE IS HIDDEN BEHIND THE MIRROR IN NIKKO'S BEDCHAMBER... TONIGHT, OUR FINE YOUNG RULER WILL BE TURNED INTO A DODDERING OLD FOOL!

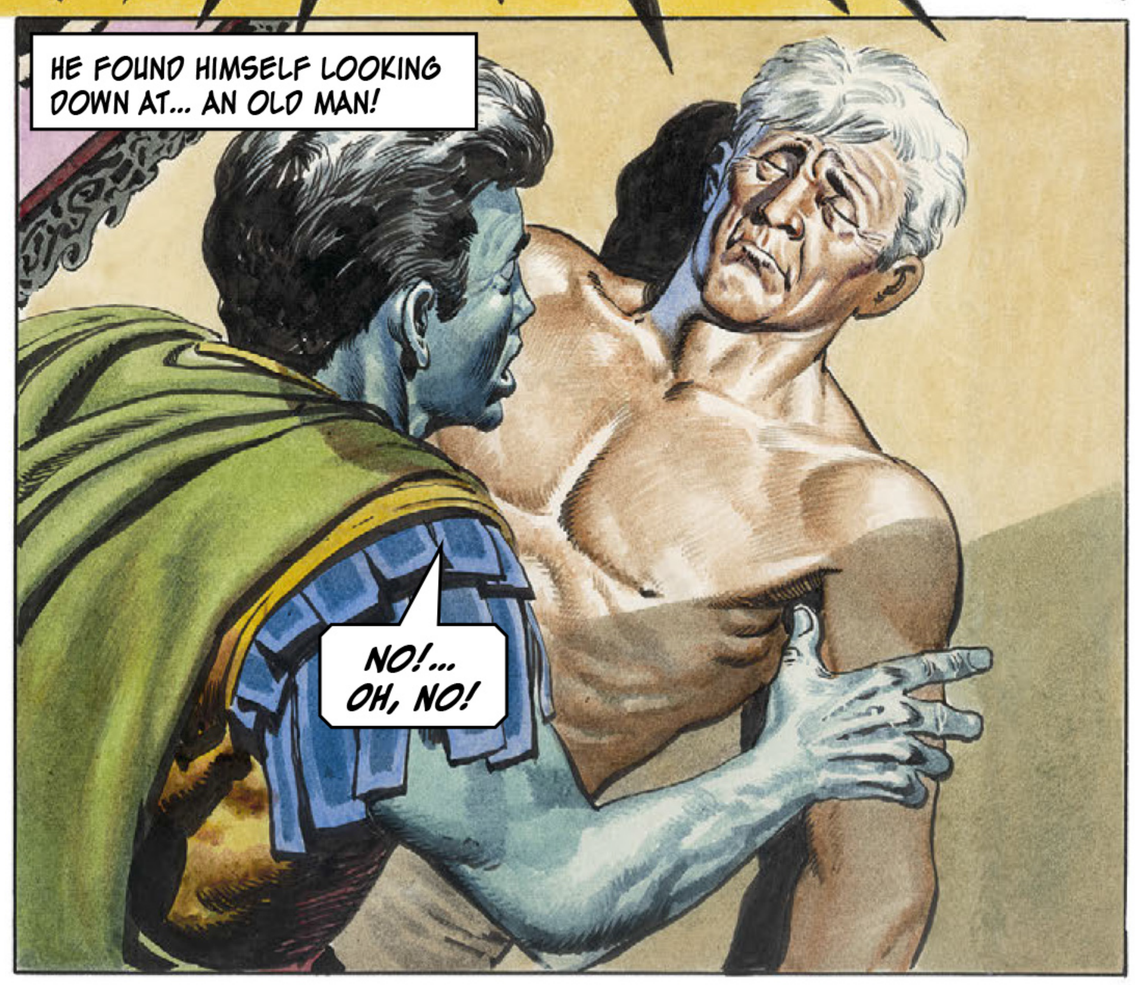

THAT NIGHT, IN THE ROYAL PALACE, JANNO SPOKE TO HIS TWO COMRADES.
I DON'T LIKE IT! IF NACHA AND THE COUNCIL ARE GUILTY MEN, THEY MIGHT TRY TO ASSASSINATE NIKKO!
THEN WE MUST KEEP WATCH OVER HIS BEDCHAMBER TONIGHT!
YES! WE CAN'T RELY ON THE HERICON GUARDS!

AND SO, KEREN KEPT THE FIRST WATCH ON NIKKO'S DOOR THAT NIGHT.


INSIDE, THE FUTURE KING OF HERICON PREPARED FOR BED...
IF NACHA AND THE COUNCIL ARE GUILTY, I'LL CRUSH THEM UNDERFOOT... JUST AS MY FATHER, THE EMPEROR, WOULD... AND RULE HERICON JUSTLY!

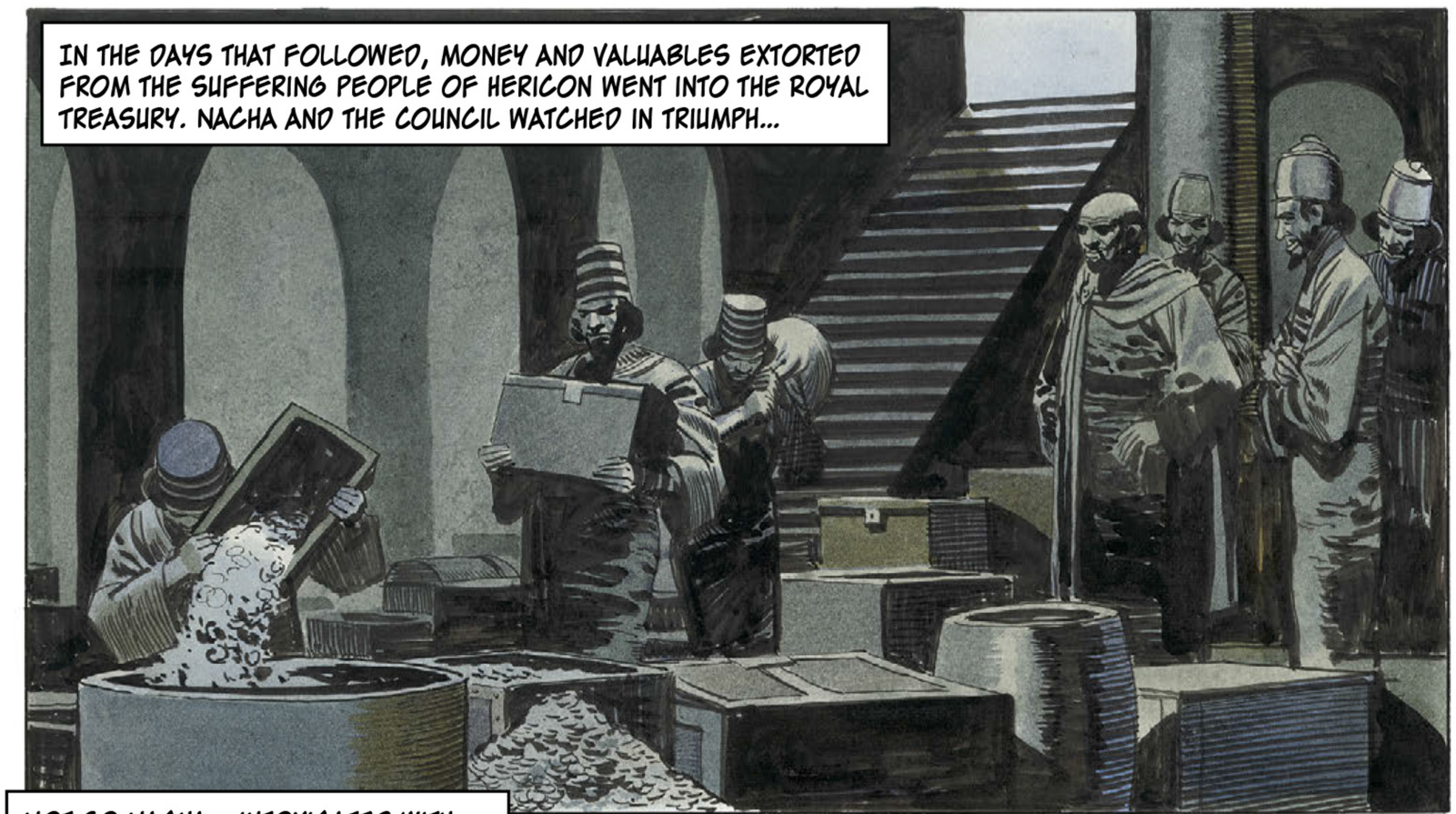
AND THEN...
AAAAAAAH! WHAT- WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME!

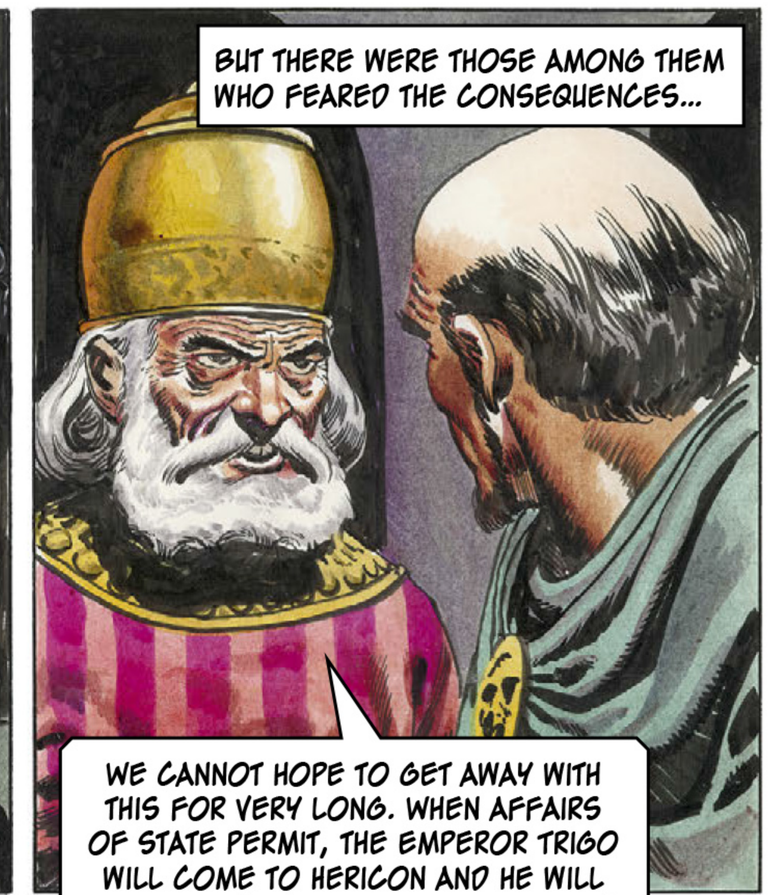

OUT IN THE CORRIDOR, KEREN HEARD THE THUD OF A FALLING BODY. HE RUSHED INTO THE CHAMBER.
YOUR HIGHNESS!


HE FOUND HIMSELF LOOKING DOWN AT... AN OLD MAN!
NO!... OH, NO!

THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS OUT HUNTING WILD ZARGOT ON THE PLAIN OF VORG WITH HIS BROTHER BRAG...
...WHEN AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT OF THE AIR FLEET BROUGHT THE FATEFUL NEWS.
URGENT! FROM HERICON, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
IT MUST BE FROM NIKKO, BRAG... I HOPE HE ISN'T HAVING TROUBLE WITH HIS NEW SUBJECTS!
LATER, OLD PERIC, THE WISEST MAN ON THE PLANET ELEKTON, WAS SUMMONED TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE.
PERIC! DO YOU KNOW OF A DISEASE OR AFFLICTION WHICH CAN TURN A VIGOROUS YOUTH INTO A DODDERING OLD MAN IN THE SPACE OF MOMENTS?
SUCH A THING IS UNHEARD OF... IMPOSSIBLE!
NO, IT'S FROM YOUNG JANNO. HE SAYS... OH, NO...! NO!
SHOCKED, THE EMPEROR DROPPED THE MESSAGE. BRAG PICKED IT UP...
NIKKO...! MY BOY...
IT- IT'S UNBELIEVABLE!
IT HAS HAPPENED TO NIKKO! AFFAIRS OF STATE PREVENT ME FROM GOING TO HERICON NOW BUT YOU WILL JOURNEY THERE AT ONCE... EXAMINE MY SON... AND CURE HIM IF YOU CAN!
THE FOLLOWING DAY, PERIC LANDED IN HERICON CITY, WHERE HE WAS MET BY NIKKO'S COMRADE, JANNO.
IS IT REALLY TRUE, THEN?
YES, PERIC! SUMMON UP ALL YOUR COURAGE... YOU'RE GOING TO NEED IT!

INDEED, IT TOOK COURAGE TO GAZE UPON THE FEEBLE CREATURE IN THE ROYAL PALACE... AND TO REALISE THAT HE WAS INDEED PRINCE NIKKO.
NIKKO... YOUR HIGHNESS... DON'T YOU KNOW ME? IT'S PERIC.
THE WEARY EYES GAVE NO FLICKER OF RECOGNITION.
DO I KNOW YOU?... YES, I SUPPOSE I MUST... BUT I'M SO TIRED... SO TIRED...
PERIC THOROUGHLY EXAMINED THE STRICKEN NIKKO... AND THEN...
I AM BAFFLED! IT IS BEYOND MY KNOWLEDGE! I CAN DO... NOTHING!
A FEW DAYS LATER, NIKKO WAS CROWNED KING OF HERICON WITH GREAT POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE... AND THE NEW KING FELL ASLEEP DURING THE MAGNIFICENT CEREMONY!
NACHA WATCHED, TRIUMPHANTLY!
NOW MY FRIENDS AND I CAN GO ON RULING JUST AS WE PLEASE... NIKKKO WILL BE LIKE A PUPPET IN OUR HANDS!
THE CHIEF REGENT WASTED NO TIME...
JUST SIGN THIS, YOUR MAJESTY... SEE, I'LL GUIDE YOUR HAND... AND THEN YOU CAN GO BACK TO SLEEP AGAIN!
AND...
BUT WE'VE ALREADY PAID OUR TAXES FOR THE YEAR, SIR!
YOU WILL PAY THEM AGAIN... BY ORDER OF THE KING!


IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, MONEY AND VALUABLES EXTORTED FROM THE SUFFERING PEOPLE OF HERICON WENT INTO THE ROYAL TREASURY. NACHA AND THE COUNCIL WATCHED IN TRIUMPH...


BUT THERE WERE THOSE AMONG THEM WHO FEARED THE CONSEQUENCES...
WE CANNOT HOPE TO GET AWAY WITH THIS FOR VERY LONG. WHEN AFFAIRS OF STATE PERMIT, THE EMPEROR TRIGO WILL COME TO HERICON AND HE WILL SOON DISCOVER WHAT WE ARE UP TO!

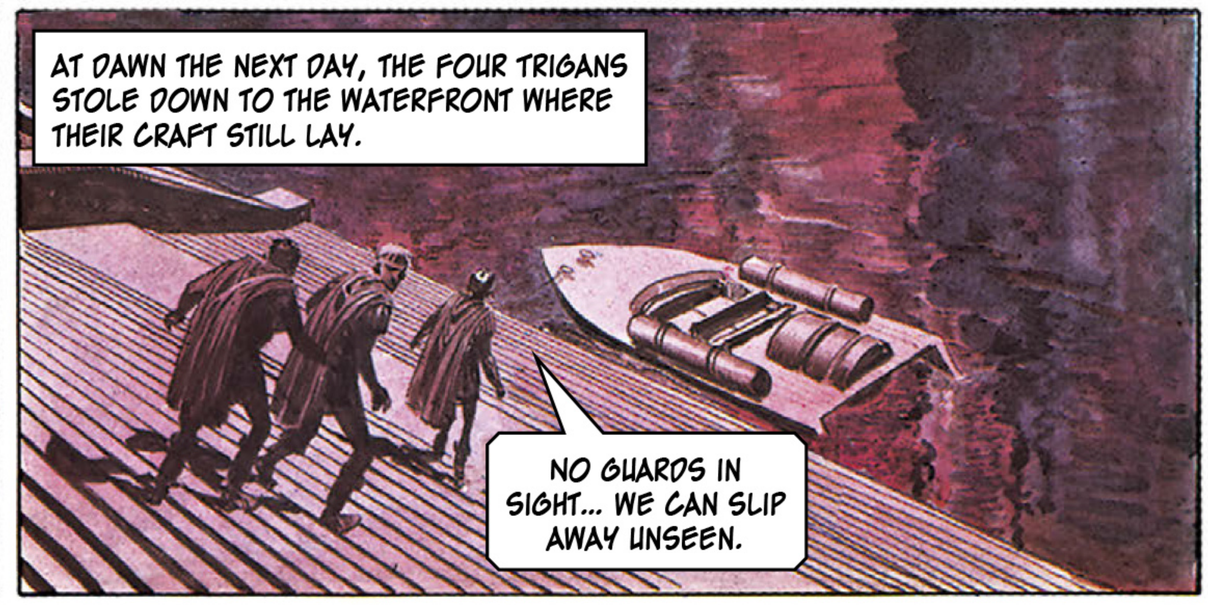
NOT SO NACHA... INTOXICATED WITH GREED AND POWER, HE FEARED NO MAN, NOT EVEN THE TRIGAN EMPEROR!
LET HIM COME! WHAT WE DID TO THE SON, WE CAN ALSO DO TO THE FATHER!

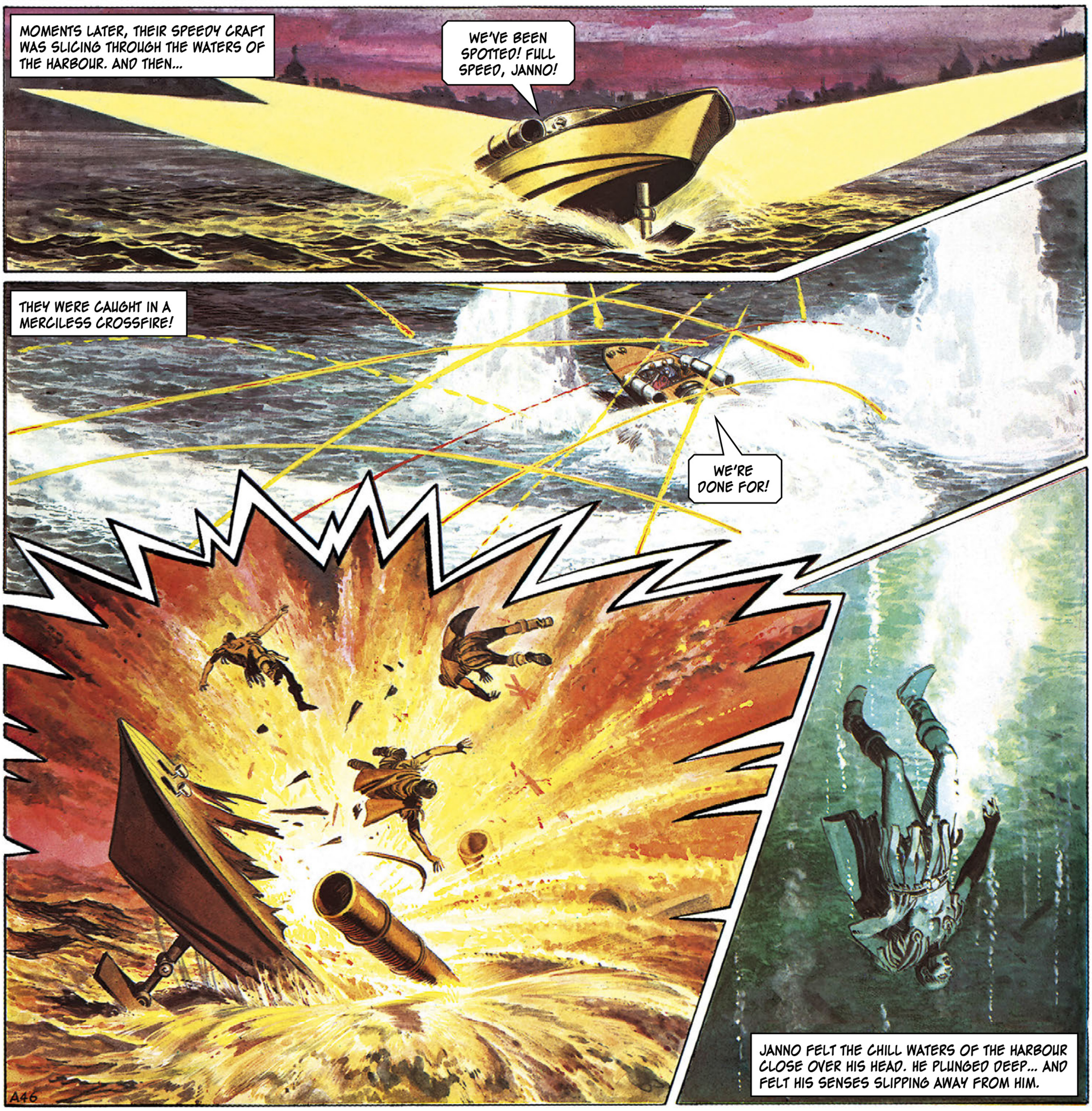
ONE MORNING, JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA CALLED TO SEE THEIR STRICKEN FRIEND NIKKO.
NO ADMITTANCE!
BUT... WE ARE THE KING'S PERSONAL AIDES!
FROM NOW ON, NO ONE ENTERS HIS MAJESTY'S APARTMENTS WITHOUT A WRITTEN ORDER FROM LORD NACHA!

INSIDE, THE PATHETIC FIGURE OF THE KING OF HERICON WAS HUNCHED SHORT-SIGHTEDLY OVER STATE PAPERS.
I FIND THIS... ALL VERY TIRING...
NEVER MIND, YOUR MAJESTY. SOON YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO SLEEP AGAIN.

WHAT'S HE SIGNING NOW, NACHA?
A PROCLAMATION APPOINTING ME IN COMMAND OF THE HERICON AIR FLEET. I INTEND TO DISBAND THE FLEET, SELL THE CRAFT AND POCKET THE MONEY!
JANNO AND HIS COMRADES LEFT THE PALACE WITH UNEASY THOUGHTS TEEMING IN THEIR MINDS.
SO! NIKKO IS NOW PRACTICALLY A PRISONER OF NACHA AND THE COUNCIL!
AND THEY'RE THE MASTERS OF HERICON!
THE PEOPLE ARE BEING ROBBED AND ILL-TREATED UNMERCIFULLY!

JANNO KNEW WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.
WE MUST RETURN TO TRIGAN AND TELL THE EMPEROR WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE!
YES, BUT WE'D BETTER LEAVE STEALTHILY... NACHA WILL PREVENT US IF HE CAN!


AT DAWN THE NEXT DAY, THE FOUR TRIGANS STOLE DOWN TO THE WATERFRONT WHERE THEIR CRAFT STILL LAY.
NO GUARDS IN SIGHT... WE CAN SLIP AWAY UNSEEN.


MOMENTS LATER, THEIR SPEEDY CRAFT WAS SLICING THROUGH THE WATERS OF THE HARBOUR. AND THEN...
WE'VE BEEN SPOTTED! FULL SPEED, JANNO!
THEY WERE CAUGHT IN A MERCILESS CROSSFIRE!
WE'RE DONE FOR!
JANNO FELT THE CHILL WATERS OF THE HARBOUR CLOSE OVER HIS HEAD. HE PLUNGED DEEP... AND FELT HIS SENSES SLIPPING AWAY FROM HIM.
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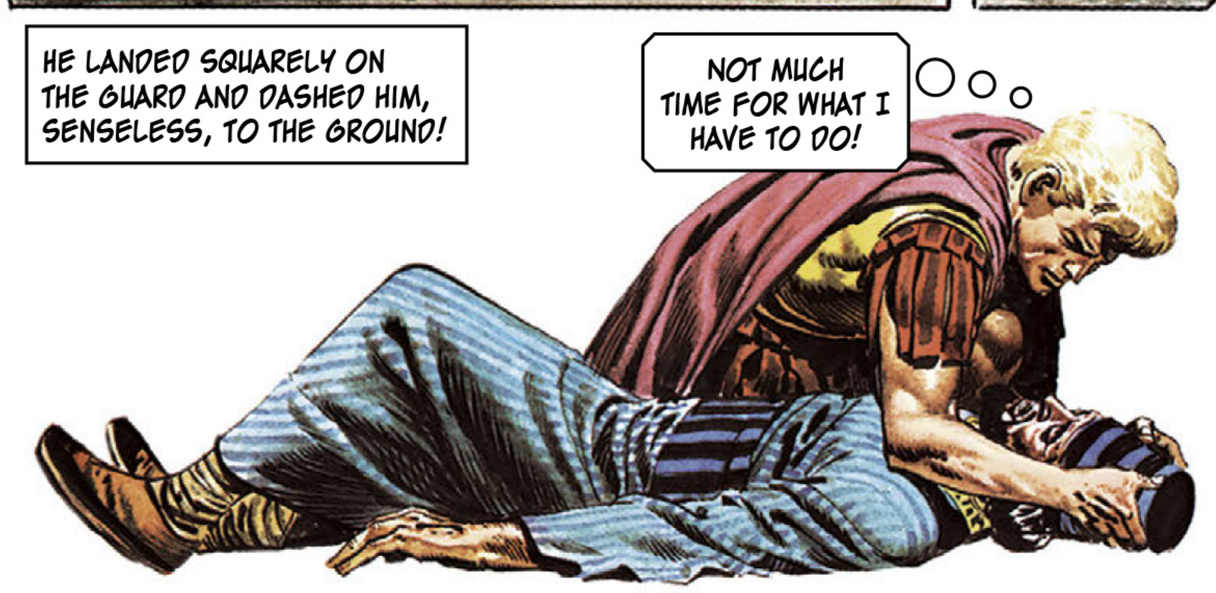
JANNO'S HAND CLOSED ROUND THE CHAIN OF A BUOY. WITH HIS LAST SPARK OF ENERGY, HE DRAGGED HIMSELF TO THE SURFACE OF THE HARBOUR.
A BOATLOAD OF HERICON GUARDS WERE SEARCHING AMONG THE WRECKAGE NEARBY. HE SAW THEM DRAG OUT THE LIMP FIGURES OF HIS TWO COMRADES.
THEY'RE STILL ALIVE.
WHAT ABOUT THE THIRD TRIGAN?
HIS BODY HAS PROBABLY BEEN SWEPT OUT TO SEA. WE'LL SEARCH TOWARDS THE HARBOUR MOUTH... BUT THERE'S NOT MUCH HOPE FOR THE BRAT!
LATER, AFTER A FRUITLESS SEARCH FOR JANNO, THEY TOOK THEIR DAZED PRISONERS INTO THE PRESENCE OF NACHA AND THE COUNCIL...
WE CAUGHT THEM ATTEMPTING TO LEAVE THE CITY, MY LORD. THE THIRD ONE WAS DROWNED.
EXCELLENT... EXCELLENT!
SO! YOU FINE YOUNG HEROES HAVE DISCOVERED WHAT IS HAPPENING IN HERICON, EH? AND NO DOUBT YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY TO TELL ALL TO YOUR BELOVED EMPEROR?
THAT WE WERE! BUT THE EMPEROR WILL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH, NACHA... THEN YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WILL BE DONE FOR!
A COWARDLY BLOW SENT HIM SPRAWLING TO THE FLOOR.
I COULD KILL YOU BOTH NOW... BUT I HAVE A BETTER PLAN!
NACHA ORDERED ZOGG'S INFERNAL MACHINE TO BE BROUGHT.
I HAVE A PLEASANT TASK FOR YOU, ZOGG! YOU WILL SUBJECT THESE TWO INTERFERING BRATS TO THE SAME TREATMENT YOU METED OUT TO THEIR MASTER!

KEREN WATCHED IN GROWING ALARM AS HIS BOUND COMRADE WAS THRUST BEFORE THE DEVICE.
MOMENTS LATER, ROFFA WAS AN OLD MAN!
KEREN SWIFTLY SUFFERED THE SAME FATE... AND THEN...
TAKE THEM AWAY! THESE OLD DOTARDS WILL NOT GIVE US ANY MORE TROUBLE! HEH! HEH!
MEANWHILE, PERIC WAS EATING HIS MORNING MEAL ON THE TERRACE OF THE HOUSE WHERE HE WAS STAYING. HE HEARD A RUSTLE OF FOLIAGE... AND SAW THE FACE OF HIS YOUNG FRIEND.
SHHHH!
WHY... IT'S JANNO!
WHATEVER-?
LISTEN! THEY'VE CAPTURED KEREN AND ROFFA AND WE'RE BOTH IN DEADLY DANGER! NACHA'S GUARDS ARE WATCHING THIS HOUSE... IF YOU MADE ANY ATTEMPT TO RETURN TO TRIGAN, OR SEND A MESSAGE TO THE EMPEROR, YOU'D BE DONE FOR!
NACHA'S GUARDS BURST IN. THEY FOUND OLD PERIC ALONE ON THE TERRACE.
AND THEN... THE THUNDER OF KNOCKING ON THE STREET DOOR BELOW!
OPEN UP! IN THE NAME OF THE KING!
BREAK IT DOWN!
YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!

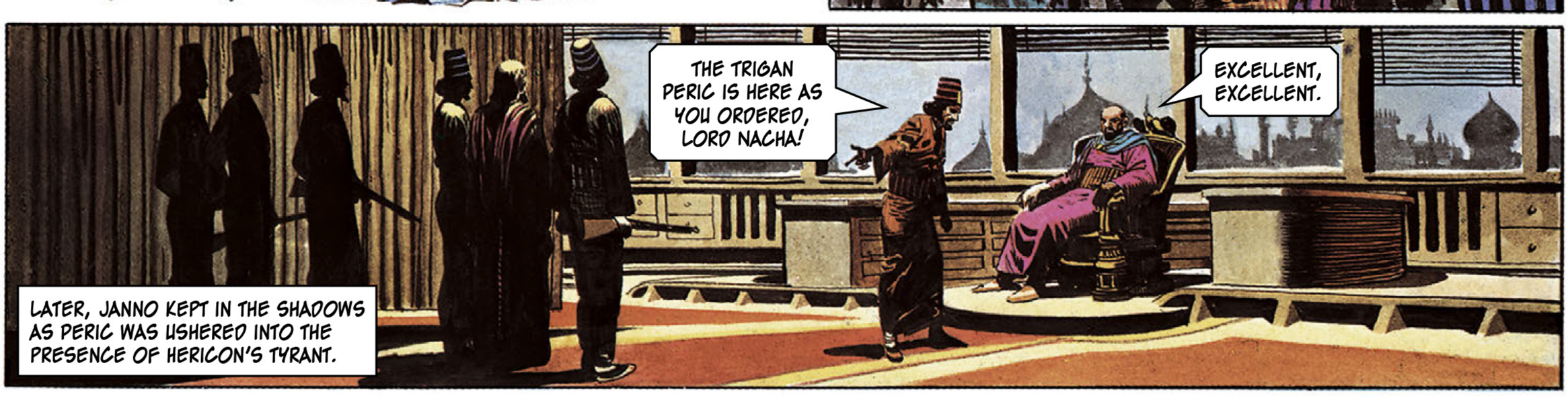
JANNO WATCHED HELPLESSLY FROM HIS PLACE OF CONCEALMENT AS THE GUARDS ROUGHLY HUSTLED PERIC AWAY.
SILENCE, TRIGAN! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO MAKE DEMANDS HERE!
I DEMAND TO KNOW THE MEANING OF THIS.

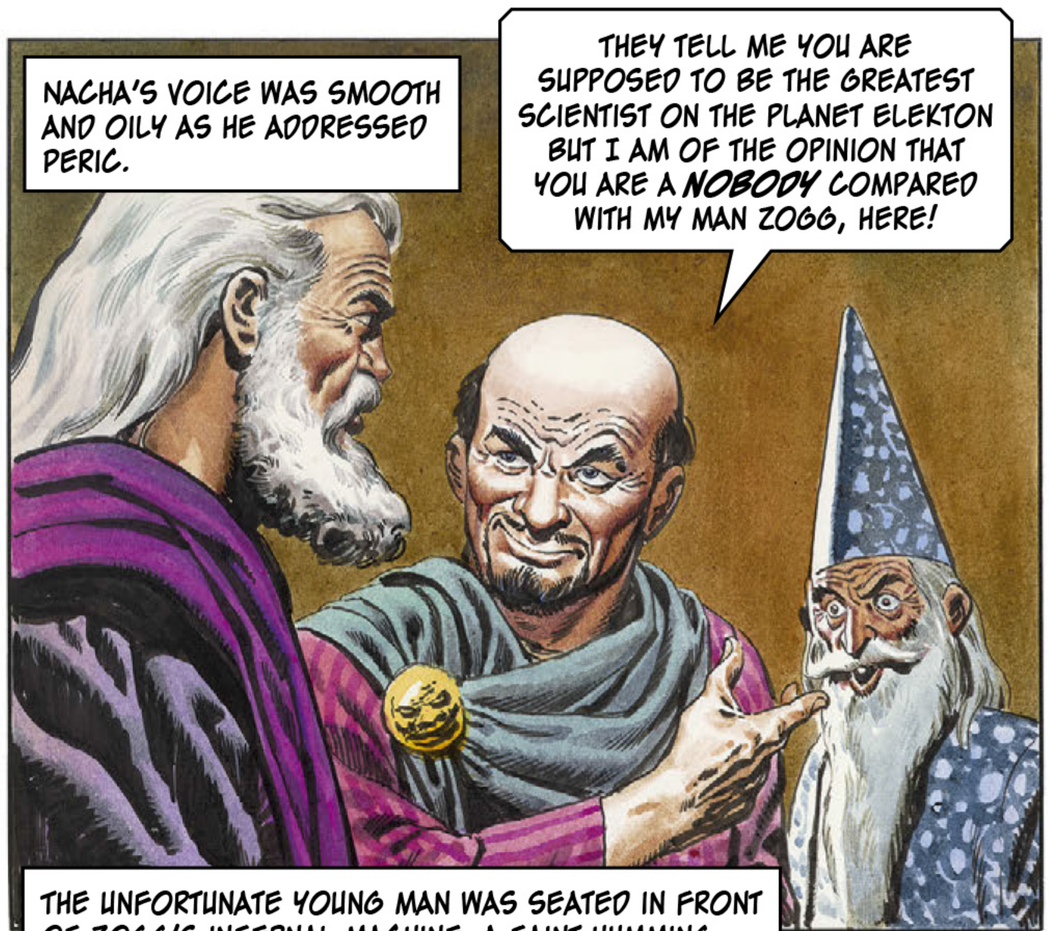
AND THEN... A HARSH SHOUT MADE JANNO LOOK DOWN!
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?

WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION, JANNO LET HIMSELF DROP!

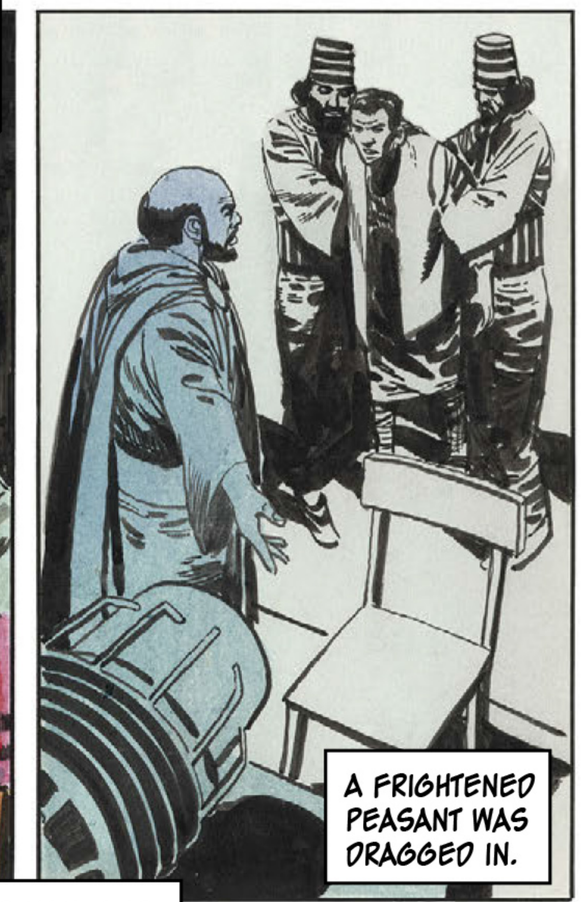

HE LANDED SQUARELY ON THE GUARD AND DASHED HIM, SENSELESS, TO THE GROUND!
NOT MUCH TIME FOR WHAT I HAVE TO DO!

WHEN THE PRISONER AND HIS ESCORT EMERGED, JANNO JOINED THE PARTY, DRESSED IN THE GUARD'S ROBES.
FALL IN WITH THE REST! WE'RE GOING TO THE PALACE!

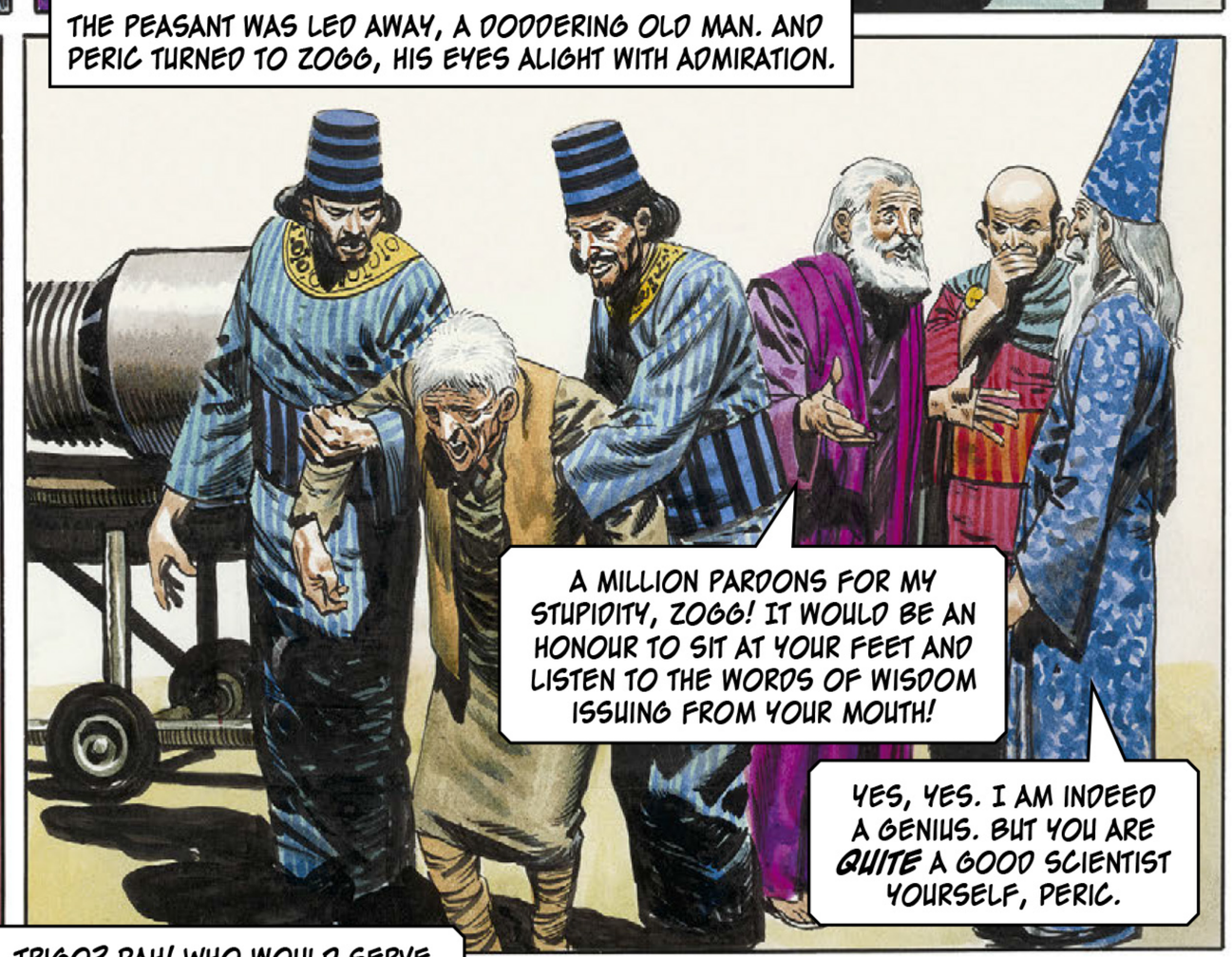

THE TRIGAN PERIC IS HERE AS YOU ORDERED, LORD NACHA!
EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT.
LATER, JANNO KEPT IN THE SHADOWS AS PERIC WAS USHERED INTO THE PRESENCE OF HERICON'S TYRANT.


NACHA'S VOICE WAS SMOOTH AND OILY AS HE ADDRESSED PERIC.
THEY TELL ME YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE THE GREATEST SCIENTIST ON THE PLANET ELEKTON BUT I AM OF THE OPINION THAT YOU ARE A NOBODY COMPARED WITH MY MAN ZOGG, HERE!

PERIC EYED THE STRANGELY GARBED FIGURE WITH BLANK CONTEMPT.
ZOGG! NEVER HEARD OF HIM. WHAT IS HE... A CLOWN?
HA! WE SHALL SEE! BRING IN THE PRISONER!


A FRIGHTENED PEASANT WAS DRAGGED IN.

THE UNFORTUNATE YOUNG MAN WAS SEATED IN FRONT OF ZOGG'S INFERNAL MACHINE. A FAINT HUMMING NOTE... AND HIS APPEARANCE BEGAN TO CHANGE!
BY THE STARS! HE IS AGEING BEFORE OUR VERY EYES!
YES. THIS MACHINE WAS INVENTED BY THE MAN YOU CALLED A CLOWN!

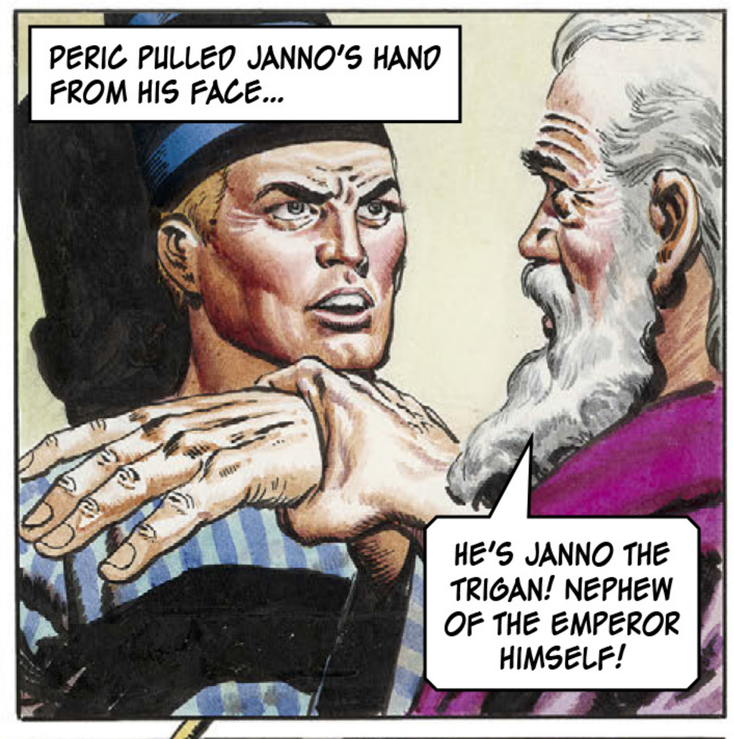

THE PEASANT WAS LED AWAY, A DODDERING OLD MAN. AND PERIC TURNED TO ZOGG, HIS EYES ALIGHT WITH ADMIRATION.
A MILLION PARDONS FOR MY STUPIDITY, ZOGG! IT WOULD BE AN HONOUR TO SIT AT YOUR FEET AND LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF WISDOM ISSUING FROM YOUR MOUTH!
YES, YES. I AM INDEED A GENIUS. BUT YOU ARE QUITE A GOOD SCIENTIST YOURSELF, PERIC.

ZOGG'S VANITY WAS TOUCHED BY PERIC'S PRAISE. HE TURNED TO HIS MASTER.
CANNOT PERIC SERVE ME AS MY ASSISTANT, LORD NACHA? HE WOULD BE INVALUABLE TO ME IN MY GREAT WORK!
CAN HE BE TRUSTED? HE IS SUPPOSED TO BE A CLOSE FRIEND OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO.

PERIC SCOFFED.
TRIGO? PAH! WHO WOULD SERVE A CREATURE LIKE TRIGO IF HE HAD THE CHANCE OF SERVING BOTH THE GREATEST SCIENTIST OF ELEKTON AND THE MAN WHO WILL ONE DAY BE MASTER OF THIS PLANET?
SO! YOU HAVE GUESSED MY AMBITION? I LIKE YOU, PERIC!

JANNO WATCHED AND LISTENED WITH FURY MOUNTING IN HIS HEART.
PERIC, YOU TREACHEROUS ANIMAL! I SHOULD KILL YOU WHERE YOU STAND!

THEN... IT HAPPENED! PERIC GLANCED ACROSS THE CHAMBER... AND JANNO WENT COLD AS THEIR EYES MET.
BY ALL THE STARS! THAT GUARD...
EH? WHAT'S WRONG, PERIC?


PERIC PULLED JANNO'S HAND FROM HIS FACE...
HE'S JANNO THE TRIGAN! NEPHEW OF THE EMPEROR HIMSELF!

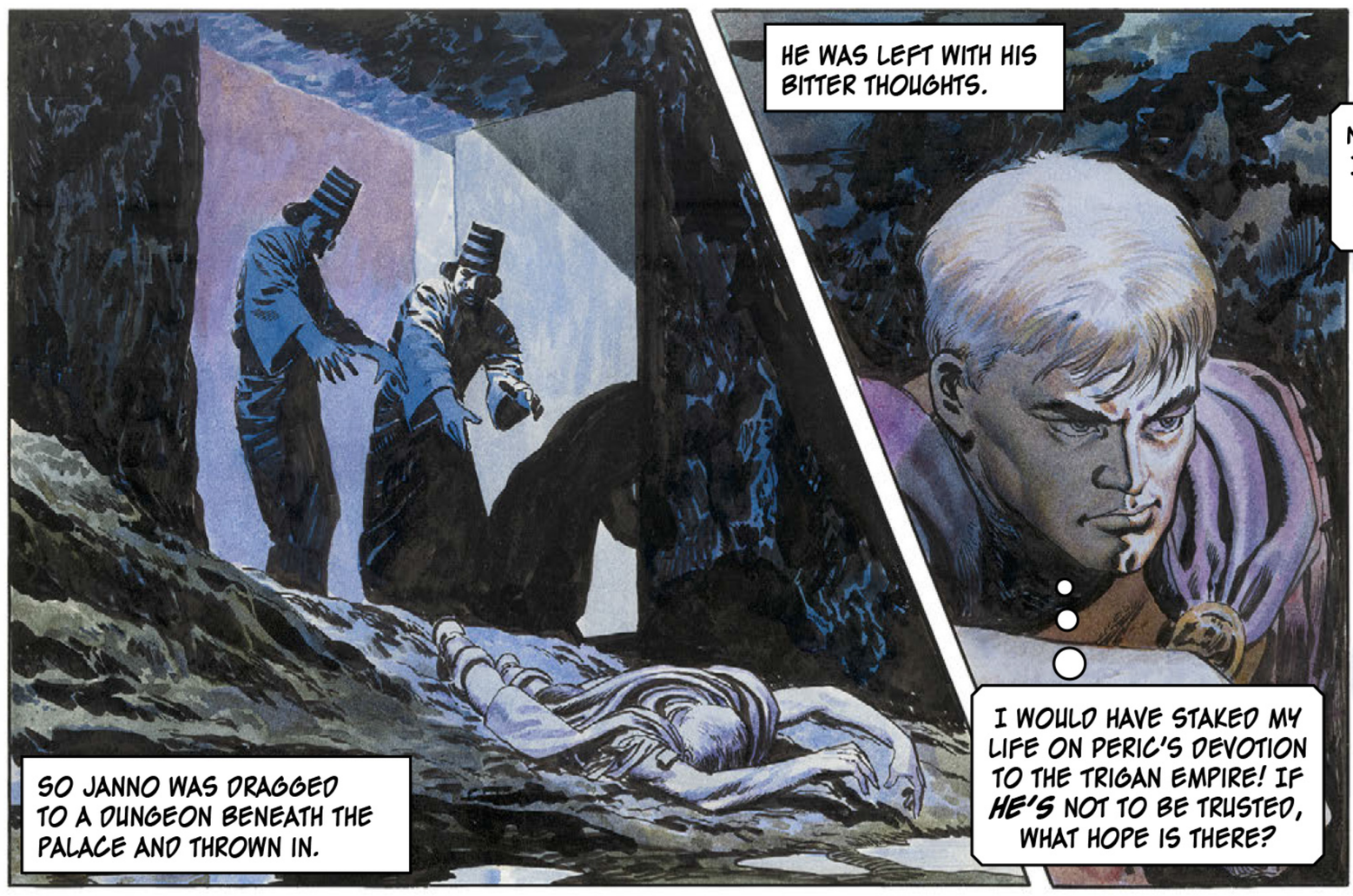
A SCARLET FURY BURNT IN JANNO'S BRAIN!
YOU TREACHEROUS ANIMAL! I'LL-!
SEIZE HIM!

UUUUUGH...

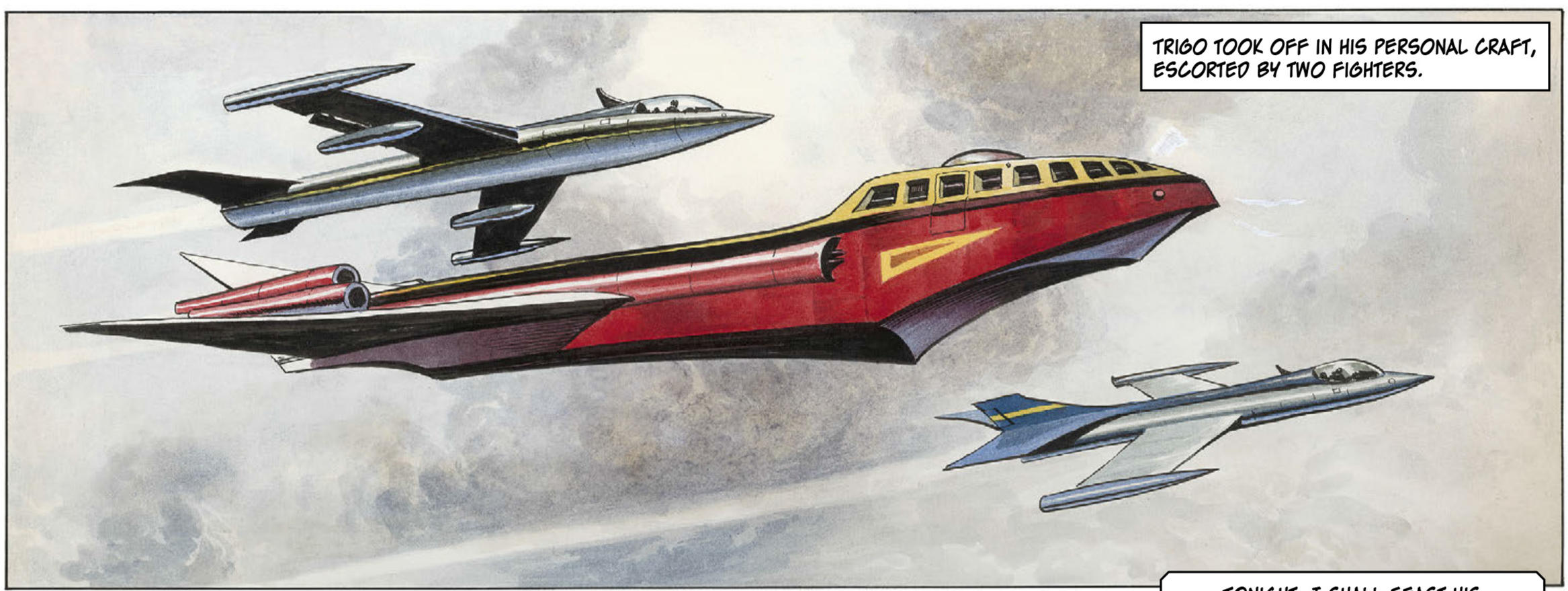
THEY DRAGGED HIM, DAZED, TO HIS FEET.
WELL, YOU HAVE INDEED PROVED YOUR FAITHFULNESS TO ME, MY DEAR PERIC!
HOW COULD MY LORD NACHA EVER HAVE DOUBTED ME?

AND THEN...
AS FOR THE TRIGAN BRAT... TAKE HIM OUT INTO THE COURTYARD AND EXECUTE HIM!
NO, MY LORD!

WOULD IT NOT BE BETTER TO KEEP THE TRIGAN AS A SUBJECT FOR FURTHER EXPERIMENTS WITH YOUR DEVICE?
YES, YES, YOU'RE RIGHT, PERIC!
AS YOU PLEASE... PROVIDED HE DOES NOT SURVIVE THE EXPERIMENTS!


SO JANNO WAS DRAGGED TO A DUNGEON BENEATH THE PALACE AND THROWN IN.
HE WAS LEFT WITH HIS BITTER THOUGHTS.
I WOULD HAVE STAKED MY LIFE ON PERIC'S DEVOTION TO THE TRIGAN EMPIRE! IF HE'S NOT TO BE TRUSTED, WHAT HOPE IS THERE?

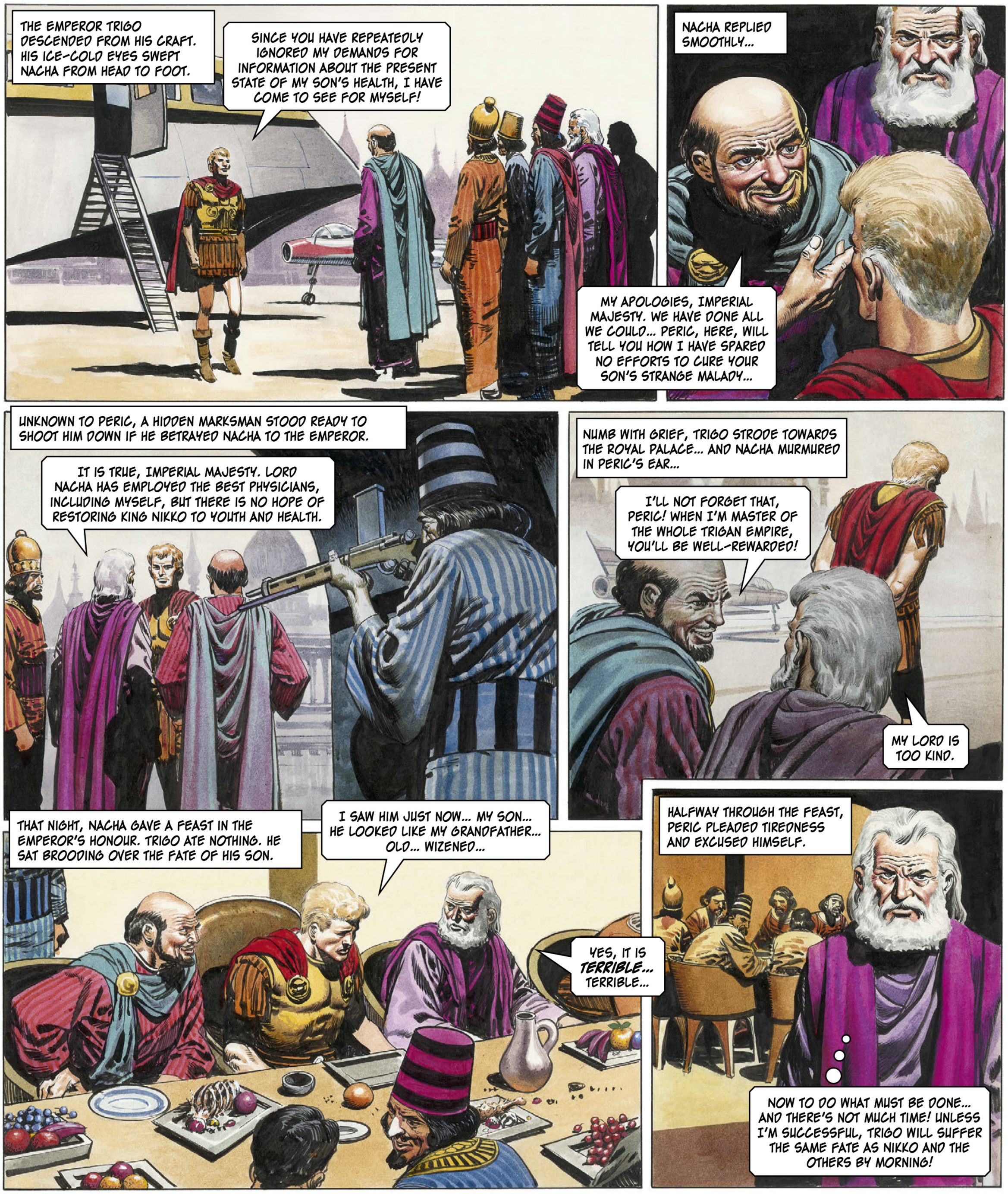
MEANWHILE, BACK IN DISTANT TRIGAN CITY, THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS GROWING DAILY MORE ANXIOUS.
NO NEWS FROM HERICON, IMPERIAL MAJESTY! THEY DON'T REPLY TO ANY OF OUR SIGNALS!
THERE'S SOME DEMON'S WORK AFOOT IN HERICON! BY THE PLANETS, I'LL GO THERE MYSELF AND FIND OUT WHO'S BEHIND IT ALL!


TRIGO TOOK OFF IN HIS PERSONAL CRAFT, ESCORTED BY TWO FIGHTERS.

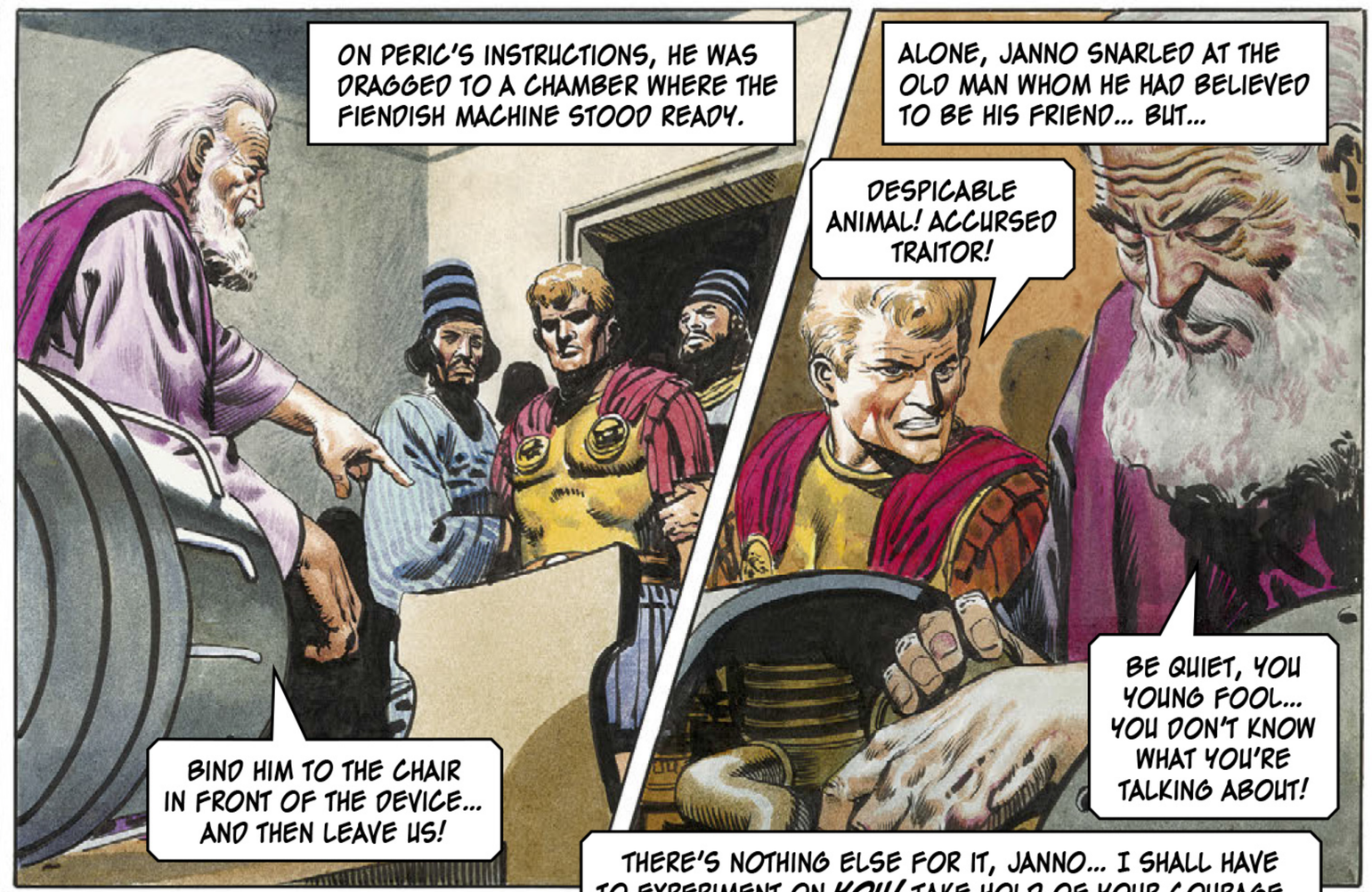
TOWARDS EVENING OF THAT SAME DAY, THE NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO NACHA.
THREE TRIGAN CRAFT ARE CIRCLING THE CITY... ONE OF THEM IS IDENTIFIED AS THE EMPEROR'S CRAFT! SHALL I ORDER THE BATTERIES TO BLOW THEM OUT OF THE SKY, LORD NACHA?
NO!

ZOGG! YOU AND YOUR ASSISTANT WILL PREPARE THE DEVICE FOR USE IN THE EMPEROR'S BEDCHAMBER TONIGHT! UNDERSTOOD?
YES, MY LORD! IT WILL BE A PLEASURE!

TONIGHT, I SHALL FEAST HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY... AND BY MORNING, THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WILL ALSO BE RULED BY A DODDERING OLD MAN!

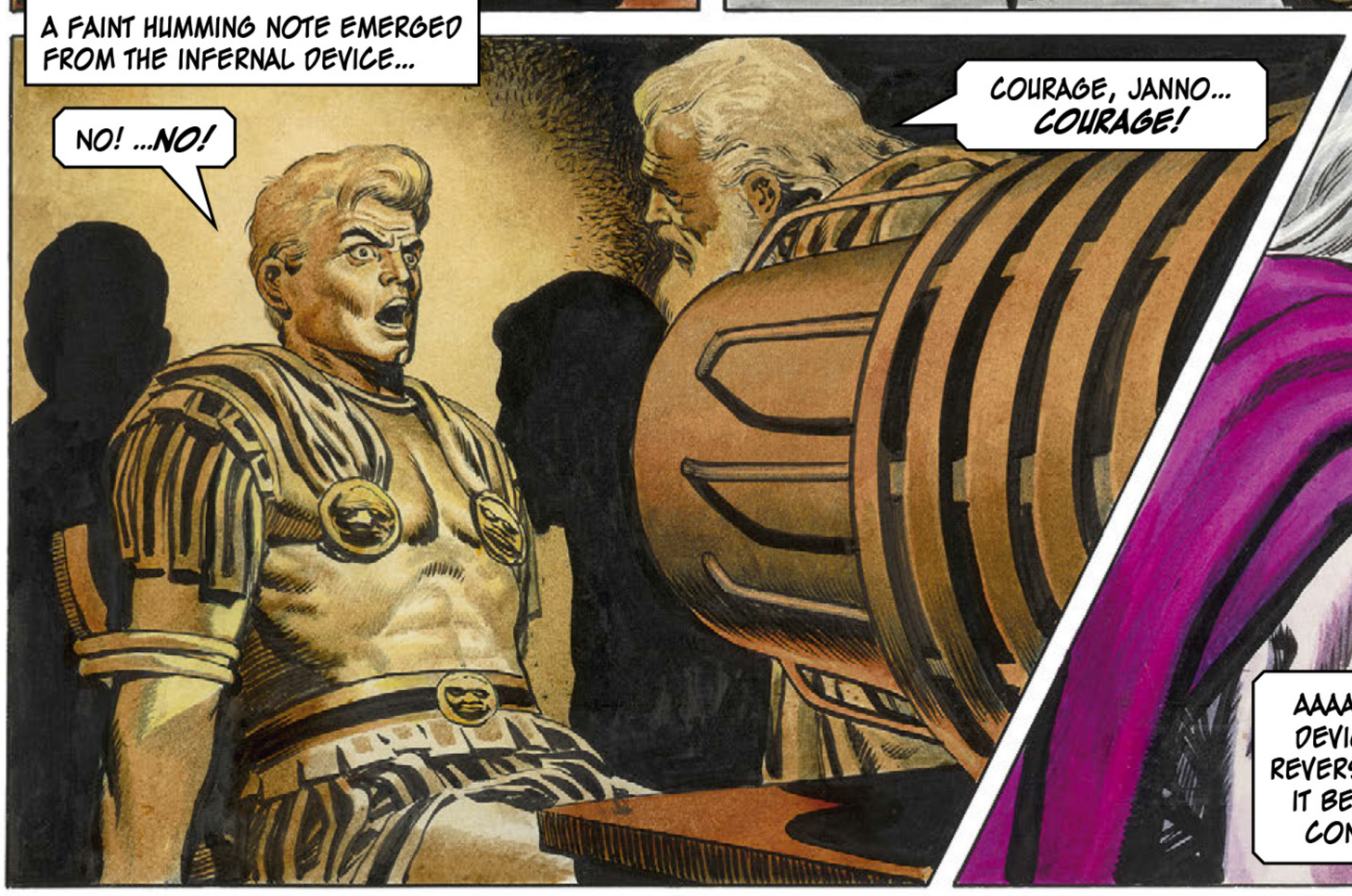

THE EMPEROR TRIGO DESCENDED FROM HIS CRAFT. HIS ICE-COLD EYES SWEPT NACHA FROM HEAD TO FOOT.
SINCE YOU HAVE REPEATEDLY IGNORED MY DEMANDS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENT STATE OF MY SON'S HEALTH, I HAVE COME TO SEE FOR MYSELF!
NACHA REPLIED SMOOTHLY...
MY APOLOGIES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. WE HAVE DONE ALL WE COULD... PERIC, HERE, WILL TELL YOU HOW I HAVE SPARED NO EFFORTS TO CURE YOUR SON'S STRANGE MALADY...
UNKNOWN TO PERIC, A HIDDEN MARKSMAN STOOD READY TO SHOOT HIM DOWN IF HE BETRAYED NACHA TO THE EMPEROR.
IT IS TRUE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. LORD NACHA HAS EMPLOYED THE BEST PHYSICIANS, INCLUDING MYSELF, BUT THERE IS NO HOPE OF RESTORING KING NIKKO TO YOUTH AND HEALTH.
NUMB WITH GRIEF, TRIGO STRODE TOWARDS THE ROYAL PALACE... AND NACHA MURMURED IN PERIC'S EAR...
I'LL NOT FORGET THAT, PERIC! WHEN I'M MASTER OF THE WHOLE TRIGAN EMPIRE, YOU'LL BE WELL-REWARDED!
MY LORD IS TOO KIND.
THAT NIGHT, NACHA GAVE A FEAST IN THE EMPEROR'S HONOUR. TRIGO ATE NOTHING. HE SAT BROODING OVER THE FATE OF HIS SON.
I SAW HIM JUST NOW... MY SON... HE LOOKED LIKE MY GRANDFATHER... OLD... WIZENED...
YES, IT IS TERRIBLE... TERRIBLE...
HALFWAY THROUGH THE FEAST, PERIC PLEADED TIREDNESS AND EXCUSED HIMSELF.
NOW TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE... AND THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME! UNLESS I'M SUCCESSFUL, TRIGO WILL SUFFER THE SAME FATE AS NIKKO AND THE OTHERS BY MORNING!

IN THE DUNGEONS BELOW THE PALACE, JANNO WAS ROUGHLY AWAKENED.
ON YOUR FEET, ANIMAL!

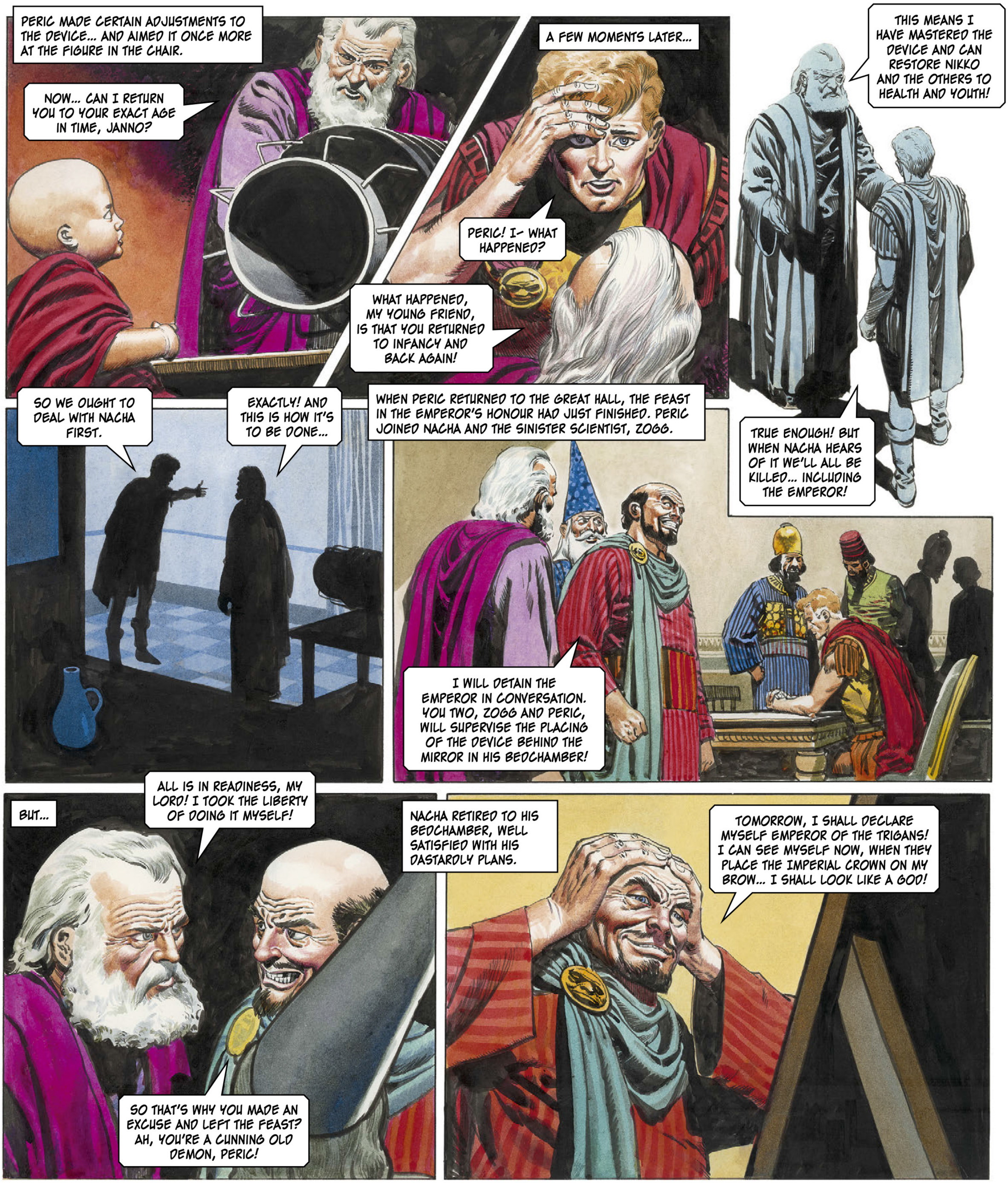

ON PERIC'S INSTRUCTIONS, HE WAS DRAGGED TO A CHAMBER WHERE THE FIENDISH MACHINE STOOD READY.
BIND HIM TO THE CHAIR IN FRONT OF THE DEVICE... AND THEN LEAVE US!
ALONE, JANNO SNARLED AT THE OLD MAN WHOM HE HAD BELIEVED TO BE HIS FRIEND... BUT...
DESPICABLE ANIMAL! ACCURSED TRAITOR!
BE QUIET, YOU YOUNG FOOL... YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE FOR IT, JANNO... I SHALL HAVE TO EXPERIMENT ON YOU! TAKE HOLD OF YOUR COURAGE... WHAT YOU ARE DOING, YOU ARE DOING FOR THE EMPIRE!

SOMETHING ABOUT PERIC'S MANNER RAISED A DOUBT IN JANNO'S MIND.
PERIC! CAN IT BE, AFTER ALL, THAT YOU'RE NOT A TRAITOR?
OF COURSE NOT! I USED MY INTELLIGENCE AND DECEIVED THAT MONSTER NACHA... TO BUY TIME!

I HAVE A NOTION THAT THIS DEVICE CAN BE PUT IN REVERSE. I HOPE I'M RIGHT, OR NIKKO AND THE OTHERS ARE DOOMED... AND SO IS THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

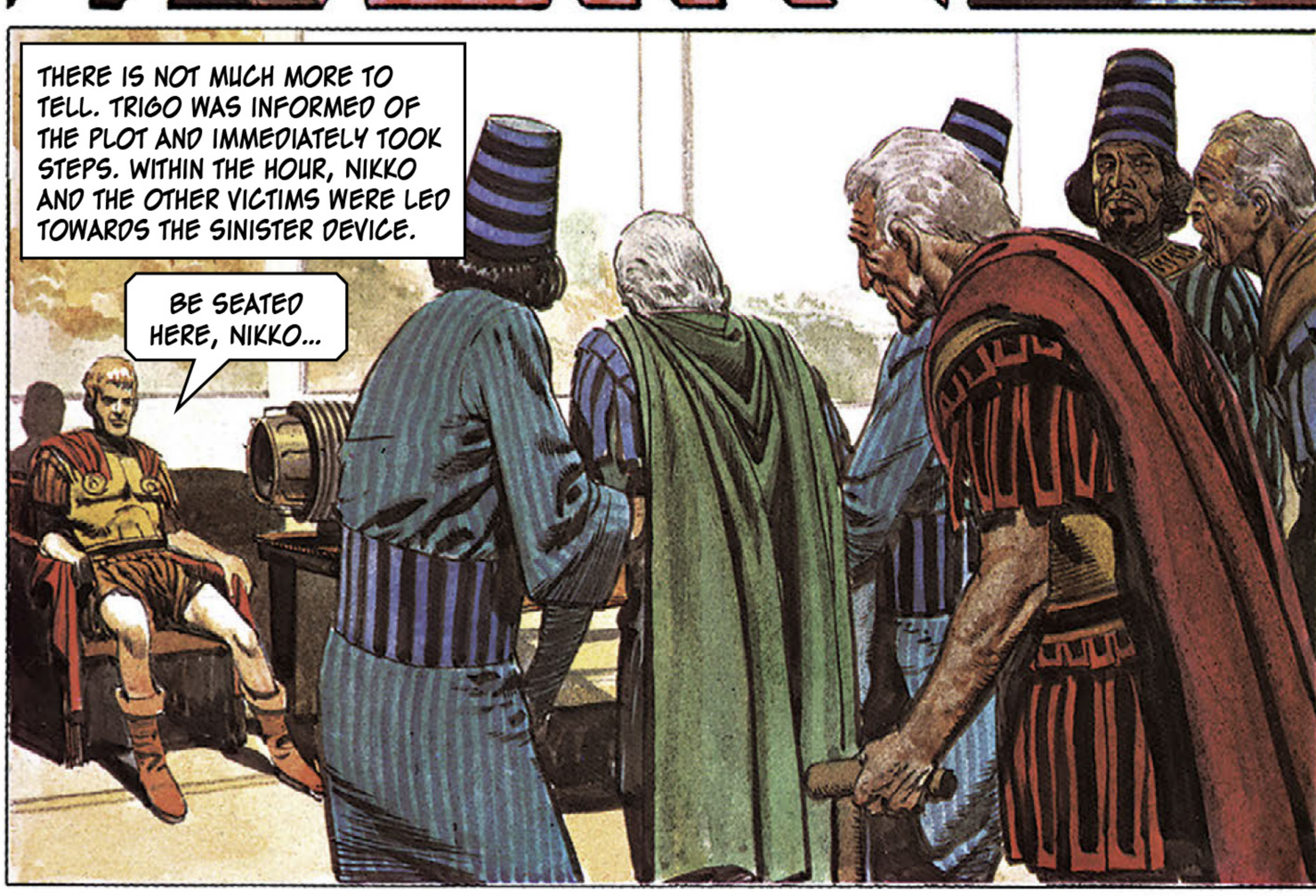

A FAINT HUMMING NOTE EMERGED FROM THE INFERNAL DEVICE...
NO! ...NO!
COURAGE, JANNO... COURAGE!

MOMENTS LATER, A THIN WAIL AROSE IN THE CHAMBER... AND FROM THE PILE OF CLOTHING ON THE CHAIR A YOUNG BABY EMERGED!
BA-A-A-A-AW!
AAAAAH! SO THE DEVICE CAN BE REVERSED! BUT CAN IT BE PRECISELY CONTROLLED?


PERIC MADE CERTAIN ADJUSTMENTS TO THE DEVICE... AND AIMED IT ONCE MORE AT THE FIGURE IN THE CHAIR.
NOW... CAN I RETURN YOU TO YOUR EXACT AGE IN TIME, JANNO?
A FEW MOMENTS LATER...
PERIC! I– WHAT HAPPENED?
WHAT HAPPENED, MY YOUNG FRIEND, IS THAT YOU RETURNED TO INFANCY AND BACK AGAIN!
THIS MEANS I HAVE MASTERED THE DEVICE AND CAN RESTORE NIKKO AND THE OTHERS TO HEALTH AND YOUTH!
SO WE OUGHT TO DEAL WITH NACHA FIRST.
EXACTLY! AND THIS IS HOW IT'S TO BE DONE...
WHEN PERIC RETURNED TO THE GREAT HALL, THE FEAST IN THE EMPEROR'S HONOUR HAD JUST FINISHED. PERIC JOINED NACHA AND THE SINISTER SCIENTIST, ZOGG.
TRUE ENOUGH! BUT WHEN NACHA HEARS OF IT WE'LL ALL BE KILLED... INCLUDING THE EMPEROR!
I WILL DETAIN THE EMPEROR IN CONVERSATION. YOU TWO, ZOGG AND PERIC, WILL SUPERVISE THE PLACING OF THE DEVICE BEHIND THE MIRROR IN HIS BEDCHAMBER!
BUT...
ALL IS IN READINESS, MY LORD! I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF DOING IT MYSELF!
SO THAT'S WHY YOU MADE AN EXCUSE AND LEFT THE FEAST? AH, YOU'RE A CUNNING OLD DEMON, PERIC!
NACHA RETIRED TO HIS BEDCHAMBER, WELL SATISFIED WITH HIS DASTARDLY PLANS.
TOMORROW, I SHALL DECLARE MYSELF EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS! I CAN SEE MYSELF NOW, WHEN THEY PLACE THE IMPERIAL CROWN ON MY BROW... I SHALL LOOK LIKE A GOD!

AND THEN... A FAINT HUMMING NOTE FROM BEHIND THE MIRROR...
AAAAAAH! WHAT- WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?

THE SENTRY OUTSIDE THE DOOR HEARD THE HIGH-PITCHED WAIL OF A BABY. HE BURST IN...
BY ALL THE STARS! HOW DID YOU GET HERE?


THERE IS NOT MUCH MORE TO TELL. TRIGO WAS INFORMED OF THE PLOT AND IMMEDIATELY TOOK STEPS. WITHIN THE HOUR, NIKKO AND THE OTHER VICTIMS WERE LED TOWARDS THE SINISTER DEVICE.
BE SEATED HERE, NIKKO...

BY CAREFUL CONTROL OF THE DEVICE, PERIC WAS ABLE TO RESTORE THEM TO YOUTH AND HEALTH!
MY BOY! I NEVER THOUGHT TO SEE YOU AS YOURSELF AGAIN!

AS FOR NACHA, ZOGG AND THE RASCALLY COUNCIL OF REGENTS WHO HAD PLOTTED TO TAKE OVER THE EMPIRE...
I THINK YOU WILL AGREE, MY FRIENDS, THAT THOSE WICKED OLD VILLAINS MAKE VERY GOOD BABIES!

NOW THEY CAN START ALL OVER AGAIN! PERHAPS, WITH BETTER UPBRINGING, THEY WILL GROW UP TO BE USEFUL MEMBERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

AT DAWN THE NEXT DAY, TRIGO LEFT HERICON AND RETURNED TO TRIGAN CITY.
I CAN SAFELY LEAVE HERICON IN THE HANDS OF NIKKO AND HIS THREE COMRADES!

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THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE ALIEN DUST

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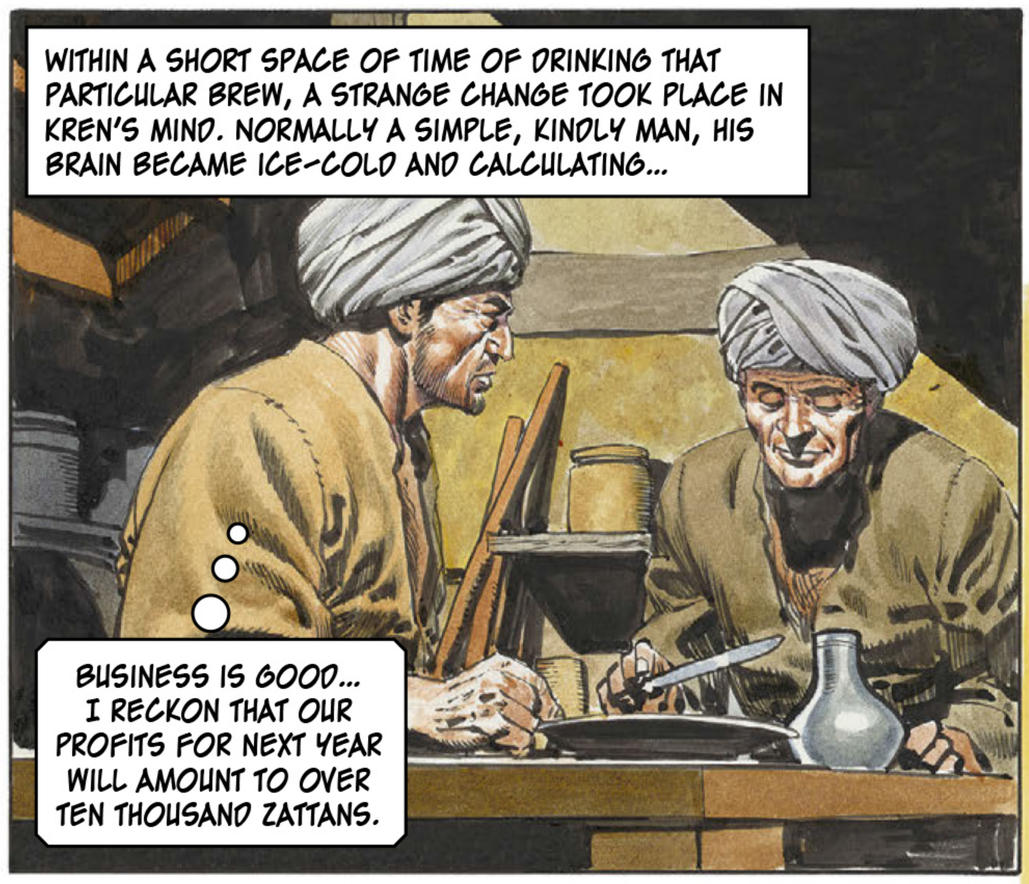
IN THE THIRD YEAR OF ZEMM, A CATACLYSM TOOK PLACE IN OUTER SPACE WHICH WAS TO HAVE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES FOR THE TEEMING MILLIONS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. TWO PLANETS COLLIDED!
PARTICLES OF THE RIVEN WORLDS TRAVELLED MANY LIGHT YEARS ACROSS THE TRACKLESS WASTES. SOME WERE DRAWN INTO THE GRAVITATIONAL FIELD OF THE PLANET ELEKTON AND DESCENDED AS METEORITES.
MINUTE FRAGMENTS OF ALIEN PLANT LIFE WHICH HAD SURVIVED THE JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE JOINED WITH THE WEED SCALLA...
ONE HUGE FRAGMENT FELL IN A FIELD IN HERICON, CLOSE TO A PATCH OF COMMON WEED WHICH THE PEOPLE OF THAT COUNTRY CALLED SCALLA...
IN THE HOT SEASON, WHEN THE SCALLA FLOWERED, IT WAS GATHERED BY TWO BROTHERS NAMED JUD AND KREN.
I'VE NEVER SEEN THE SCALLA SO BIG AS IT IS THIS YEAR.
THE BROTHERS MADE A GOOD LIVING BREWING THE HERICON NATIONAL BEVERAGE, CALLED GORBAL, FROM THE SCALLA WEED.
STRANGELY ENOUGH, JUD DETESTED THE DRINK THAT PROVIDED HIM WITH A LIVING. IT WAS ALWAYS KREN WHO TASTED THE BREW.
BY THE STARS, BROTHER, IT'S THE FINEST DROP OF GORBAL I'VE EVER DRUNK IN MY LIFE!
I'LL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT.


WITHIN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME OF DRINKING THAT PARTICULAR BREW, A STRANGE CHANGE TOOK PLACE IN KREN'S MIND. NORMALLY A SIMPLE, KINDLY MAN, HIS BRAIN BECAME ICE-COLD AND CALCULATING...
BUSINESS IS GOOD... I RECKON THAT OUR PROFITS FOR NEXT YEAR WILL AMOUNT TO OVER TEN THOUSAND ZATTANS.

THAT'S A LOT OF MONEY. PITY I HAVE TO SHARE IT WITH *HIM*.

THAT EVENING, AS WAS THEIR CUSTOM, JUD AND KREN WENT FOR A WALK ALONG THE CLIFF TOP *AND...*
NOW!

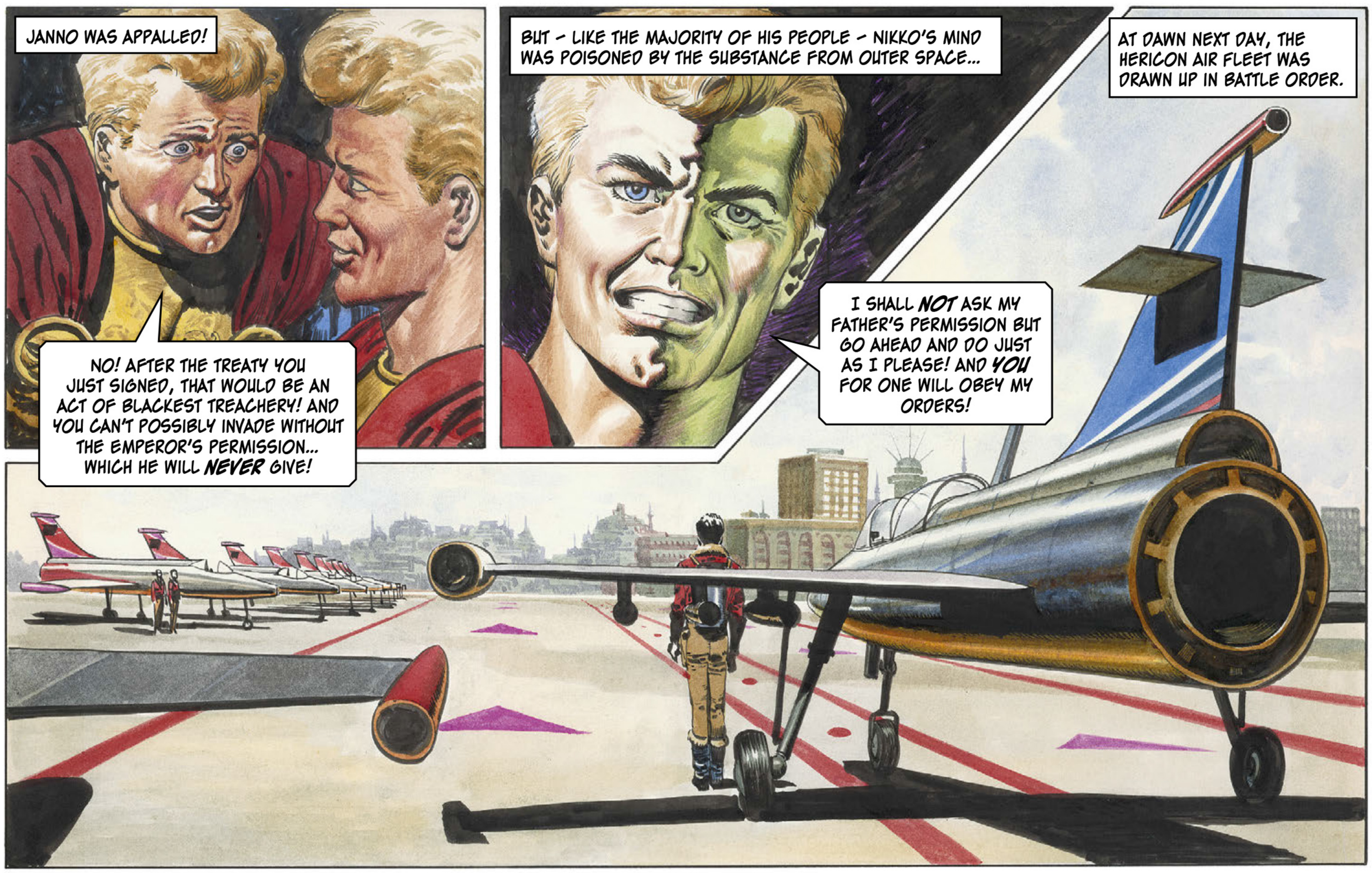
AAAGH!

HEH! HEH! HEH!
KREN FELT NO REMORSE. THIS WAS THE EFFECT OF THE ALIEN PLANT LIFE ON THE SCALLA WEED FROM WHICH THE GORBAL HAD BEEN BREWED.

FROM THEN ON, KREN WAS IN BUSINESS ON HIS OWN. NEXT DAY, HE DELIVERED A CONSIGNMENT OF THE FIENDISH BREW TO THE ROYAL PALACE AT HERICON CITY...
IS IT A GOOD BREW?
YOU NEVER TASTED BETTER.

...WHERE IT WAS DRUNK BY, AMONG OTHERS, YOUNG NIKKO, THE NEWLY-CROWNED KING OF HERICON!

LATER THAT YEAR, AN ATMOSPHERE LINER ARRIVED AT HERICON CITY FROM THE NEARBY SMALL COUNTRY OF ZETH.
AS KING NIKKO'S AIDE, JANNO GREETED THE GROUP OF ZETH EMISSARIES.
HIS MAJESTY AWAITS YOU, MY LORDS.
MAJESTY, WE BRING GIFTS AND A PROMISE OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT A TREATY OF EVERLASTING PEACE CAN BE SIGNED BETWEEN HERICON AND ZETH.
LATER, NIKKO OF HERICON LISTENED COURTEOUSLY TO THE LEADER OF THE EMISSARIES.
THIS IS MY HOPE ALSO... AND I THANK YOU FOR THE GIFTS, MY LORDS.
AND THEN...
JOIN ME IN A GOBLET OF GORBAL... NO? WELL, OUR NATIONAL BEVERAGE IS NOT TO EVERYONE'S TASTE. MY COUSIN JANNO, HERE, FOR INSTANCE, CAN'T ABIDE IT!
AND NOW TO BUSINESS... THE TREATY YOU SPOKE OF...
I HAVE A ROUGH DRAFT HERE, MAJESTY. PERHAPS YOU WOULD CARE TO GLANCE OVER THE VARIOUS POINTS AND MAKE ANY CHANGES YOU SEE FIT?
NIKKO GLANCED AT THE DRAFT TREATY AND SIGNED IT. THE EMISSARIES LEFT. AND WHEN THEY HAD GONE...
HEH, HEH, HEH! THE FOOLS... THE GULLIBLE FOOLS!
NIKKO...? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
FOR ANSWER, NIKKO CROSSED TO A WALL MAP.
THIS IS WHAT I MEAN, COUSIN! TOMORROW, I AM GOING TO INVADE ZETH! IT IS A SMALL COUNTRY BUT RICH IN NATURAL RESOURCES... AND A GOOD JUMPING-OFF POINT FOR FURTHER CONQUESTS!


JANNO WAS APPALLED!
NO! AFTER THE TREATY YOU JUST SIGNED, THAT WOULD BE AN ACT OF BLACKEST TREACHERY! AND YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY INVADE WITHOUT THE EMPEROR'S PERMISSION... WHICH HE WILL NEVER GIVE!
BUT – LIKE THE MAJORITY OF HIS PEOPLE – NIKKO'S MIND WAS POISONED BY THE SUBSTANCE FROM OUTER SPACE...
I SHALL NOT ASK MY FATHER'S PERMISSION BUT GO AHEAD AND DO JUST AS I PLEASE! AND YOU FOR ONE WILL OBEY MY ORDERS!
AT DAWN NEXT DAY, THE HERICON AIR FLEET WAS DRAWN UP IN BATTLE ORDER.

KEREN AND ROFFA WERE JUBILANT AT THE PROSPECT BEFORE THEM.
ZETH WILL BE OURS BY MIDDAY!
A SALVO OF DISINTEGRATOR SHELLS IN THE HEART OF THEIR CAPITAL CITY... THAT'S ALL IT WILL NEED TO BRING THE ZETHS TO THEIR KNEES!

HOW CAN THEY TALK LIKE THAT? THEY USED TO BE MEN OF HONOUR!

DIDN'T YOU HEAR THAT ORDER?
I DID...!

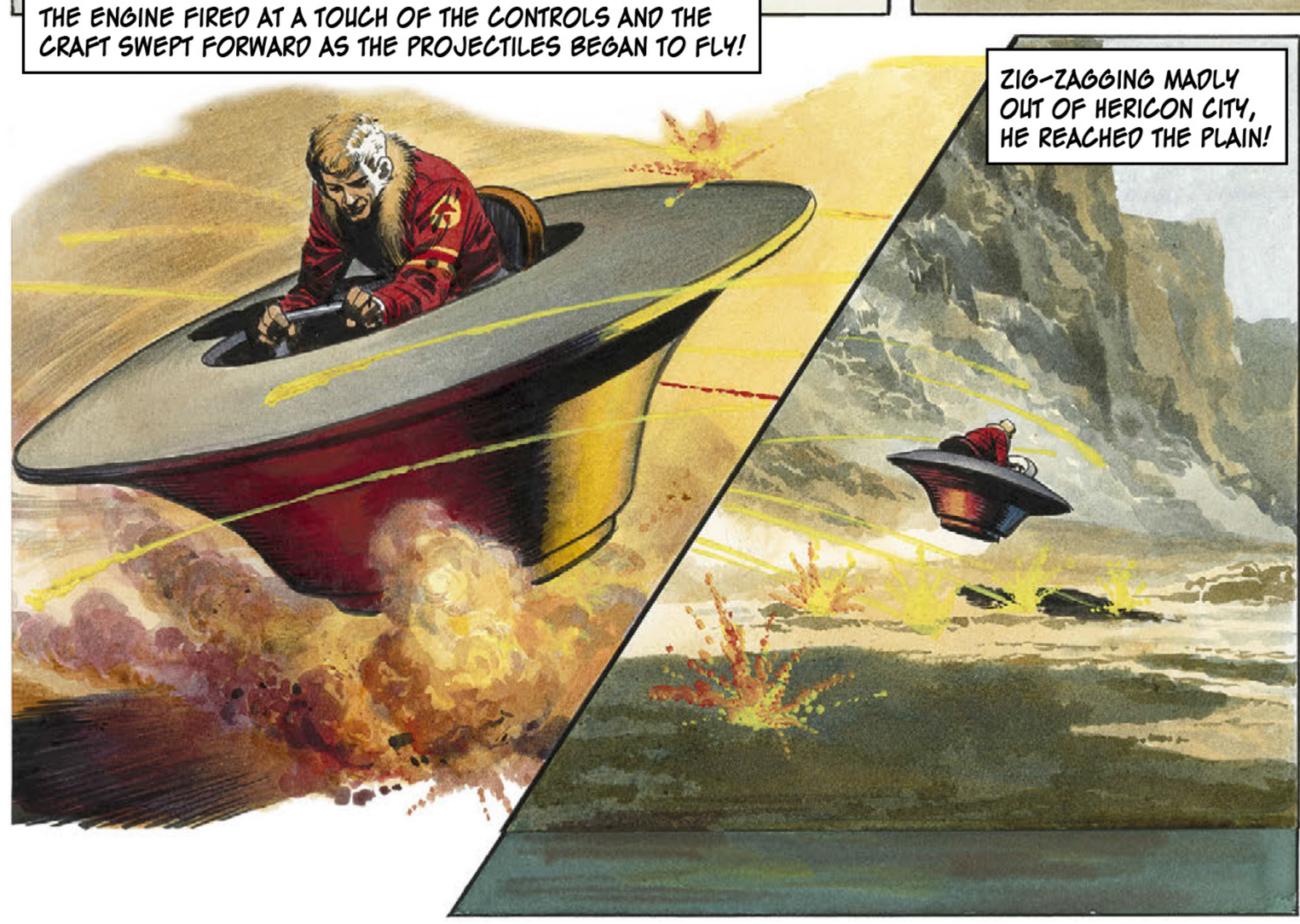
...AND I'M DISOBEYING IT!
PLACE THAT OFFICER UNDER ARREST!

JANNO WAS MARCHED AWAY.
I MUST STOP THIS IDIOCY SOMEHOW.

THEN... HE SAW HIS CHANCE...
AAAAAAGH!

UUUUUUGH!

AHEAD OF HIM WAS A ONE-MAN GIRO CRAFT. HE RACED FOR IT.
PRISONER ESCAPING! SHOOT HIM DOWN!


THE ENGINE FIRED AT A TOUCH OF THE CONTROLS AND THE CRAFT SWEPT FORWARD AS THE PROJECTILES BEGAN TO FLY!
ZIG-ZAGGING MADLY OUT OF HERICON CITY, HE REACHED THE PLAIN!

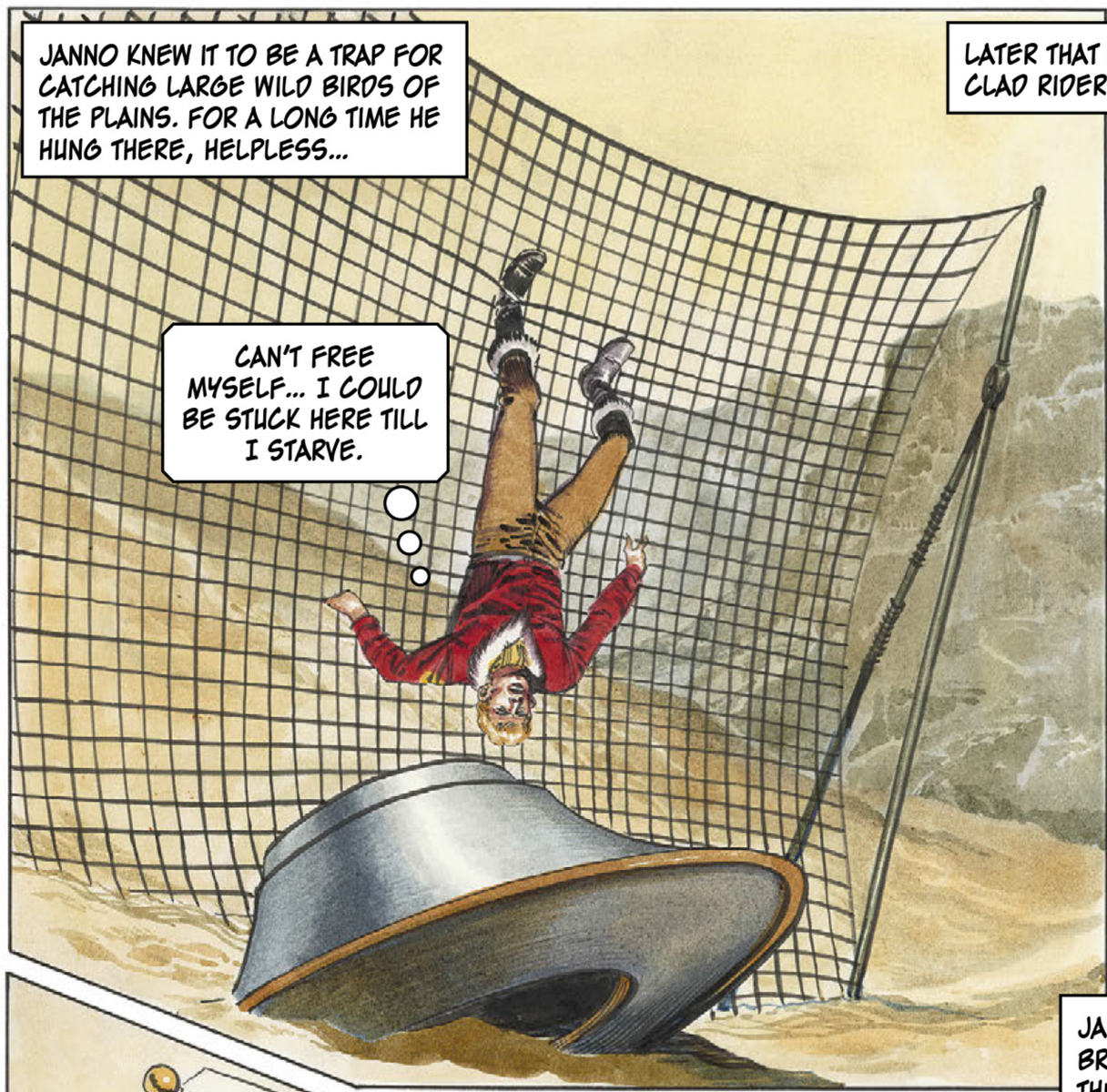
KING NIKKO WATCHED HIM GO, HIS POISONED MIND TWISTED WITH FURY.
NO MATTER, HE CAN BE HUNTED DOWN LATER! ORDER THE AIR FLEET TO TAKE OFF!

ZETH WAS NOT FAR FROM HERICON AND SOON, OVER THE UNSUSPECTING CAPITAL CITY OF THAT SMALL COUNTRY...

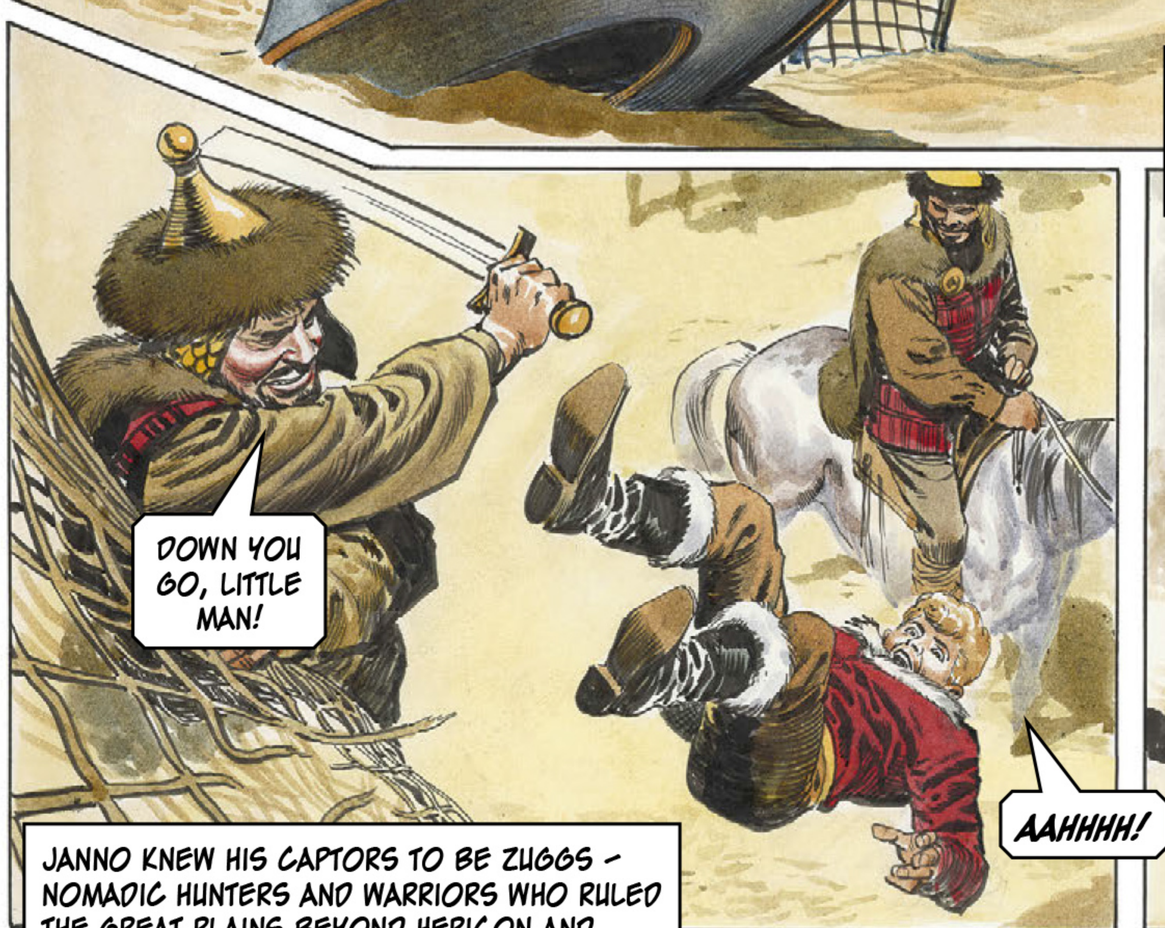
THE ZETHS CAME OUT IN THE STREETS...
OUR FRIENDS, THE HERICONS!
IT IS A DISPLAY IN CELEBRATION OF THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES!
AN INFERNO OF FIRE AND DESTRUCTION!
AAAAAAGH!
IT'S AN ATTACK!

AND THEN... SUDDENLY, SAVAGELY AND WITHOUT WARNING!
BY MIDDAY, THE HERICONS WERE MASTERS OF THE CITY... THERE WAS NO RESISTANCE FROM THE PEACEFUL ZETHS.
MEANWHILE, FAR AWAY ACROSS THE PLAIN, JANNO WAS INTENT ON PUTTING AS MUCH DISTANCE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HERICON AS POSSIBLE.
MY NEXT MOVE MUST BE TO GET TO TRIGAN AND REPORT TO THE EMPEROR!

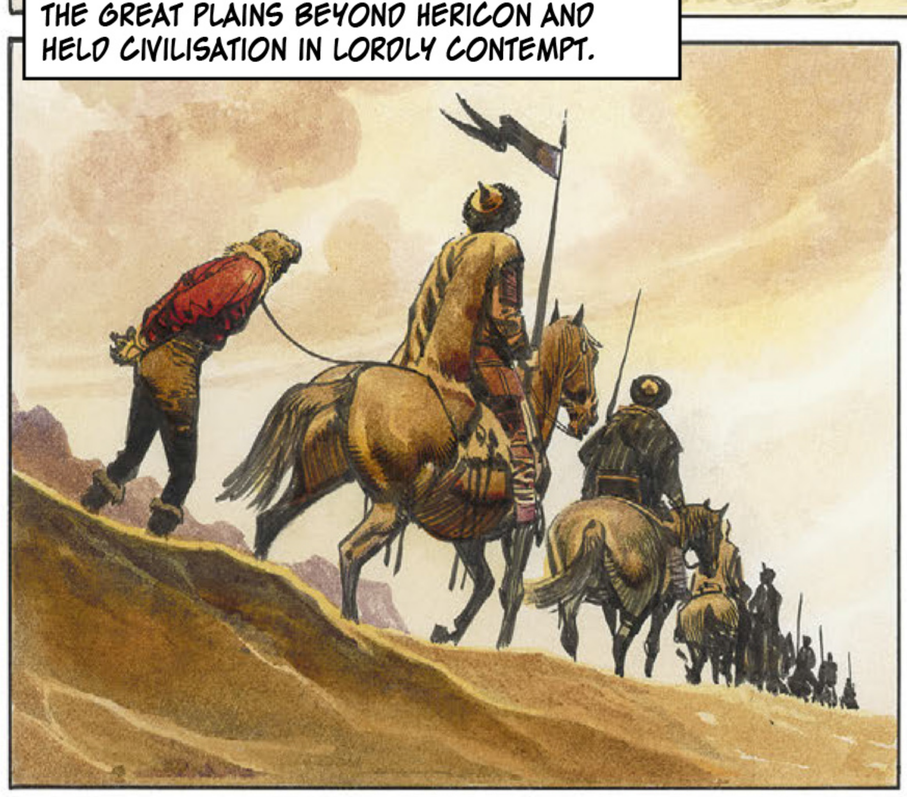
AND THEN, A GIANT STEEL NET SPRANG OUT BEFORE HIM!
AAAAAAGH!

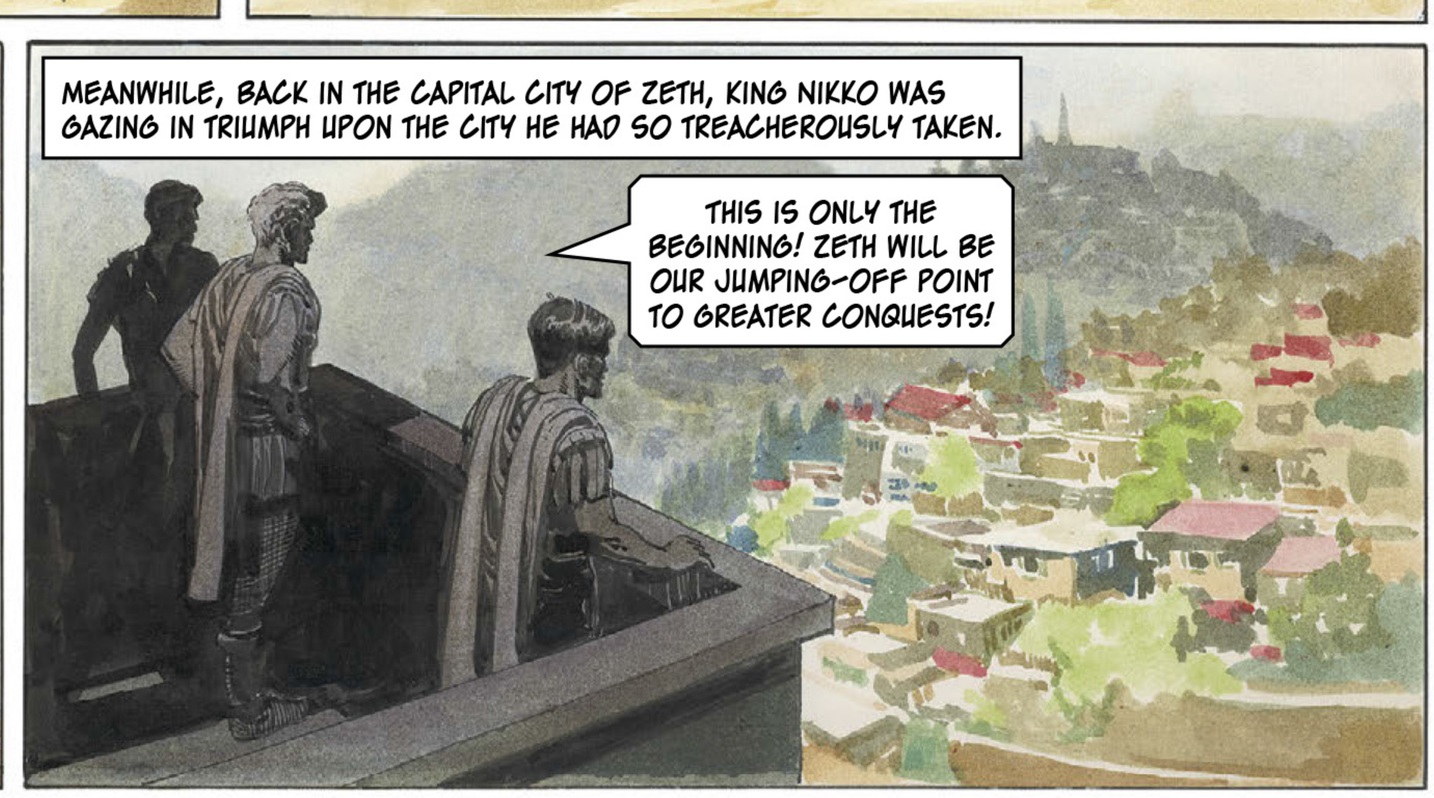

JANNO KNEW IT TO BE A TRAP FOR CATCHING LARGE WILD BIRDS OF THE PLAINS. FOR A LONG TIME HE HUNG THERE, HELPLESS...
CAN'T FREE MYSELF... I COULD BE STUCK HERE TILL I STARVE.

LATER THAT DAY, A PARTY OF FUR-CLAD RIDERS APPROACHED.
HA! WE'VE CAUGHT A MAN IN OUR TRAP, JEGIZ!
SO WE HAVE! CUT HIM DOWN AND LET'S SEE WHAT MANNER OF FELLOW HE IS!


DOWN YOU GO, LITTLE MAN!
AAHHHH!
JANNO KNEW HIS CAPTORS TO BE ZUGGS – NOMADIC HUNTERS AND WARRIORS WHO RULED THE GREAT PLAINS BEYOND HERICON AND HELD CIVILISATION IN LORDLY CONTEMPT.

JANNO LANDED WITH BREATH-TAKING FORCE AT THE FEET OF THE MASSIVE LEADER OF THE PARTY.
HMMM! HE IS A CITY-DWELLER... EITHER TRIGAN OR HERICON. A PUNY-LOOKING FELLOW BUT I SUPPOSE WE CAN PUT HIM TO SOME USE. BRING HIM ALONG!




MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE CAPITAL CITY OF ZETH, KING NIKKO WAS GAZING IN TRIUMPH UPON THE CITY HE HAD SO TREACHEROUSLY TAKEN.
THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING! ZETH WILL BE OUR JUMPING-OFF POINT TO GREATER CONQUESTS!

LIKE THE KING, THE MINDS OF KEREN AND ROFFA HAD BEEN POISONED BY THE SINISTER PLANT LIFE FROM OUTER SPACE.
THE EMPEROR ISN'T GOING TO LIKE IT!
MY FATHER CAN LIKE IT OR DISLIKE IT AS HE PLEASES! NOTHING HE SAYS OR DOES IS GOING TO STOP ME!
NEWS OF THE INVASION HAD REACHED TRIGAN CITY AND EMPEROR TRIGO WAS IN A TOWERING FURY.
HAS THE YOUNG FOOL TAKEN LEAVE OF HIS SENSES? DOES HE THINK I ENTRUSTED HIM WITH THE KINGDOM OF HERICON TO SET THE PLANET AFLAME WITH WARS OF CONQUEST?
YOU TWO – RILLA AND GORTH... GO TO MY SON! TELL HIM I DEMAND HIS PRESENCE IN TRIGAN CITY IMMEDIATELY!
AT ONCE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
THE EMPEROR'S DEMAND WAS BROUGHT TO NIKKO. THE YOUNG KING LISTENED WITH A SMILE. HE TOOK A DEEP DRINK OF THE BEVERAGE THAT WAS POISONING HIS MIND... AND GAVE HIS REPLY.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF RETURNING TO TRIGAN CITY! YOU TWO GENTLEMEN WILL CONVEY MY ANSWER BACK TO MY FATHER... I WILL ARRANGE FOR YOUR RETURN – IMMEDIATELY!
LATER, NIKKO BROUGHT OUT A WALL MAP...
AND NOW... MY NEXT MOVE! MY FORCES WILL OCCUPY THE GREAT PLAIN BEYOND ZETH. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT STEP BECAUSE OF THE VAST MINERAL DEPOSITS TO BE FOUND ON THE PLAIN.
THERE WILL BE SOME OPPOSITION FROM THE ZUGG TRIBESMEN, OF COURSE, BUT I SHALL EXPECT THEM TO BE CRUSHED IN A MATTER OF HOURS.
THAT AFTERNOON, A HERICON CRAFT CIRCLED HIGH OVER TRIGAN CITY...
GIVE YOUR EMPEROR THE MESSAGE! HA!
NIKKO'S POISONED MIND HAD DEVISED A FIENDISH REPLY TO HIS FATHER'S DEMAND!

THE ZUGG HUNTING PARTY WERE HEADING FOR THEIR MAIN CAMP IN THE HEART OF THE GREAT PLAINS. TOWARDS MIDDAY, THEIR LEADER, JEGIZ, CALLED A HALT...
WE'LL MAKE CAMP HERE!
JANNO'S HANDS WERE UNBOUND AND HE WAS CONTEMPTUOUSLY SET TO WORK.
YOU, LITTLE MAN! COLLECT SOME KINDLING AND LIGHT A FIRE!
AS JEGIZ LOWERED HIS VAST FRAME TO THE GROUND, THERE WAS A WARNING SHOUT.
JEGIZ! LOOK! BESIDE YOU!
FROM THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, THE ZUGG LEADER SAW THE RAISED HEAD OF A NOBRA. THEN HE SPOKE WITH ALL THE COOL FATALISM OF HIS RACE...
IT'S GOING TO STRIKE! WHEN I'M DEAD, YOU'LL TAKE OVER THE LEADERSHIP, ORRA... UNDERSTOOD?
AND THEN...
...JANNO ACTED!
A GOOD-HUMOURED GRIN SPREAD OVER THE ZUGG LEADER'S FACE.
THANK YOU FOR THAT, LAD! SIT DOWN BESIDE ME AND SHARE MY SUPPER. AND WHILE WE'RE EATING, YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT YOURSELF...

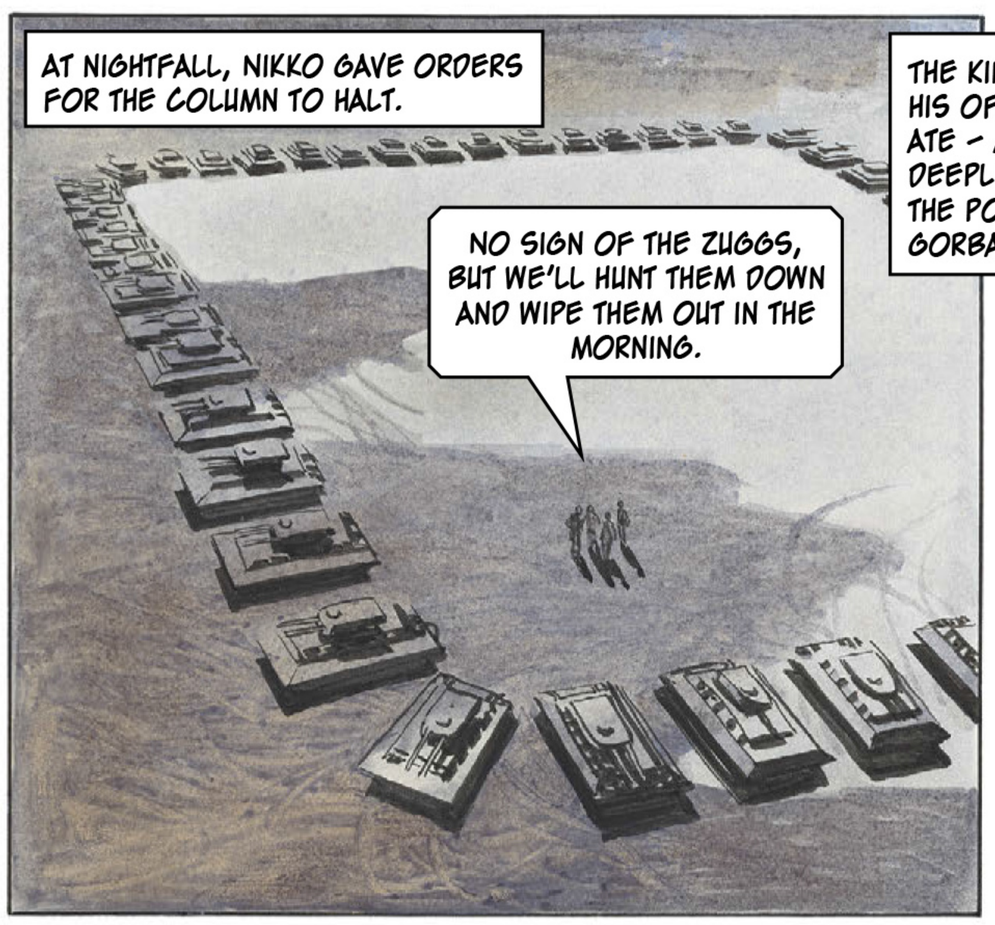
MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE HERICON CITY, THE DEAFENING ROAR OF ARMOURED FIGHTING CRAFT FILLED THE AIR.
KING NIKKO SWUNG INTO THE TURRET OF THE LEADING CRAFT.
RIGHT! WE MOVE OUT AND OCCUPY THE GREAT PLAIN... THE OPERATION SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY SUNSET!
HE TOOK A DEEP DRAUGHT OF THE GORBAL WHICH WAS POISONING HIS MIND.
I DON'T EXPECT MUCH OPPOSITION FROM THE ZUGGS BUT THEY'RE TO BE WIPED OUT ON SIGHT!
AN ORDER FROM THE KING... AND THE ARMOURED COLUMN SET OFF.
DON LAWRENCE
BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE EMPEROR WAS STRIDING HIS COUNCIL CHAMBER IN A TOWERING FURY.
IF THAT SON OF MINE CHOOSES TO BEHAVE LIKE A MAD ANIMAL HE MUST BE DESTROYED LIKE A MAD ANIMAL! GIVE ORDERS TO THE AIR FLEET... WE'RE LEAVING FOR HERICON!
AND THEN...
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! NEWS FROM HERICON! KING NIKKO IS LEADING AN ARMOURED COLUMN TO OCCUPY THE GREAT PLAIN!
IS HE NOW? THEN, GENTLEMEN, YOU CAN FORGET MY LAST ORDER...
THERE WAS A GRIM SMILE ON TRIGO'S LIPS...
I HAVE FOUGHT THE MIGHTY ZUGG TRIBESMEN ON THE GREAT PLAIN AND I KNOW THIS... THE ZUGGS WILL PUNISH NIKKO FOR HIS FOLLY!

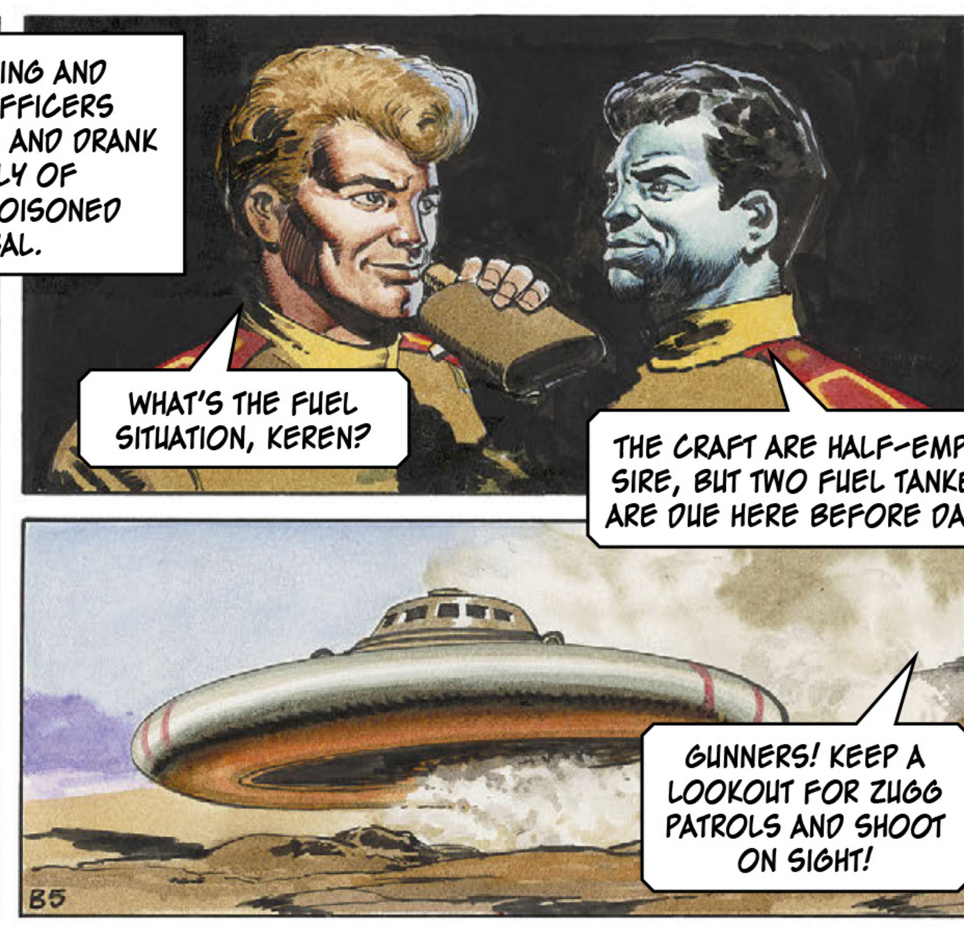
WHEN THE TWIN SUNS OF PLANET ELEKTON SANK LOW IN THE SKY, THE HERICON ARMOURED COLUMN WAS DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE GREAT PLAIN.

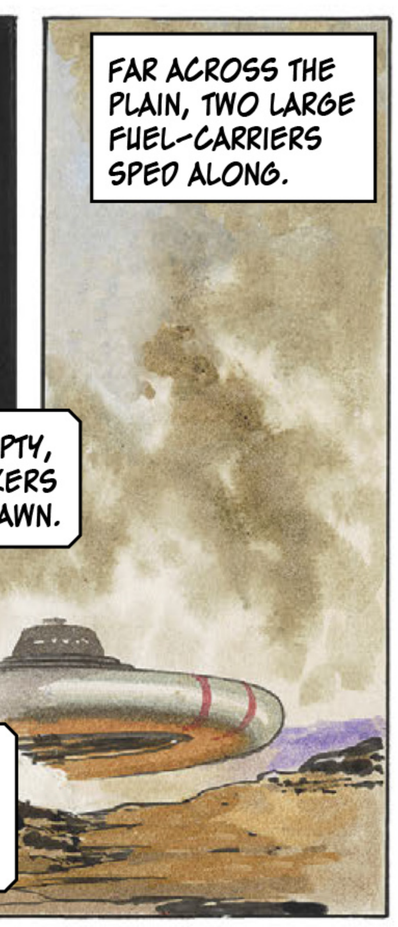
ZUGG TRIBESMEN SIGHTED THE FORCE FROM A CRAGGY MOUNTAIN CREST.
CITY DWELLERS DEFILING OUR HUNTING GROUNDS!
SO MUCH THE WORSE FOR THEM!

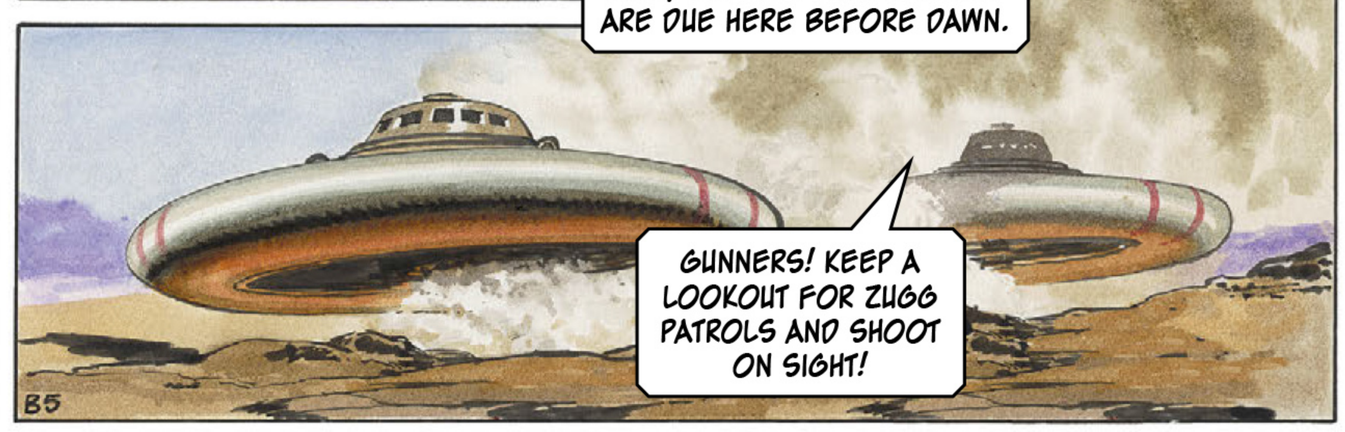
THEY BROUGHT THE NEWS TO THEIR LEADER.
ARMOURED CRAFT ARE COMING THIS WAY, JEGIZ!
THAT WILL BE NIKKO!
THEN THE KING OF HERICON IS RIDING TO DESTRUCTION!

JANNO WAS NOW AN HONOURED GUEST OF THE WARRIOR-HUNTERS. HE LISTENED IN AWE AS THE ZUGG LEADER CALMLY ADDRESSED HIS MEN.
MOUNT UP! WE'VE MUCH TO DO BEFORE DAWN. YOU ALL KNOW YOUR TASKS. BY THIS TIME TOMORROW THERE WON'T BE A SINGLE HERICON ALIVE ON THE PLAINS!


AT NIGHTFALL, NIKKO GAVE ORDERS FOR THE COLUMN TO HALT.
NO SIGN OF THE ZUGGS, BUT WE'LL HUNT THEM DOWN AND WIPE THEM OUT IN THE MORNING.


THE KING AND HIS OFFICERS ATE - AND DRANK DEEPLY OF THE POISONED GORBAL.
WHAT'S THE FUEL SITUATION, KEREN?
THE CRAFT ARE HALF-EMPTY, SIRE, BUT TWO FUEL TANKERS ARE DUE HERE BEFORE DAWN.


FAR ACROSS THE PLAIN, TWO LARGE FUEL-CARRIERS SPED ALONG.


GUNNERS! KEEP A LOOKOUT FOR ZUGG PATROLS AND SHOOT ON SIGHT!
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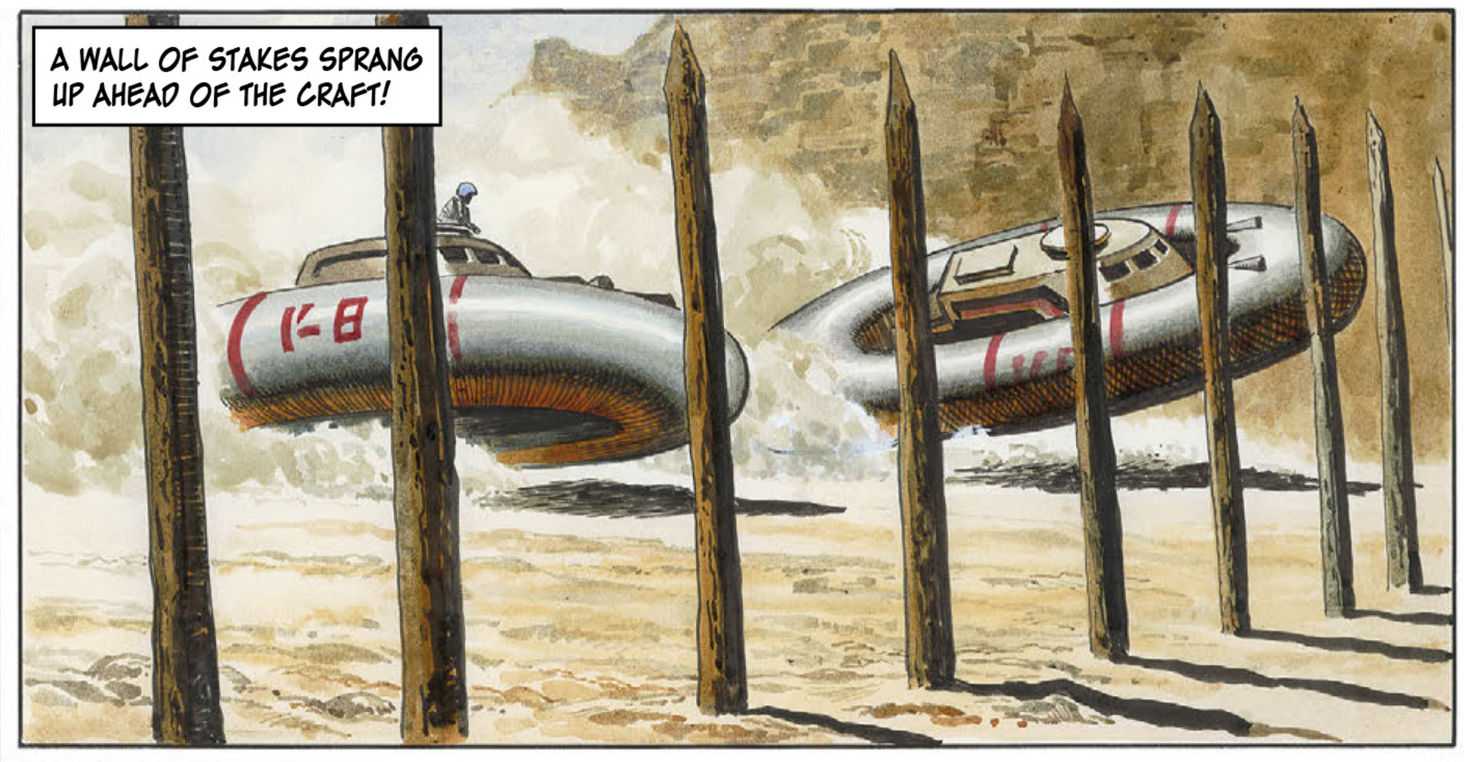
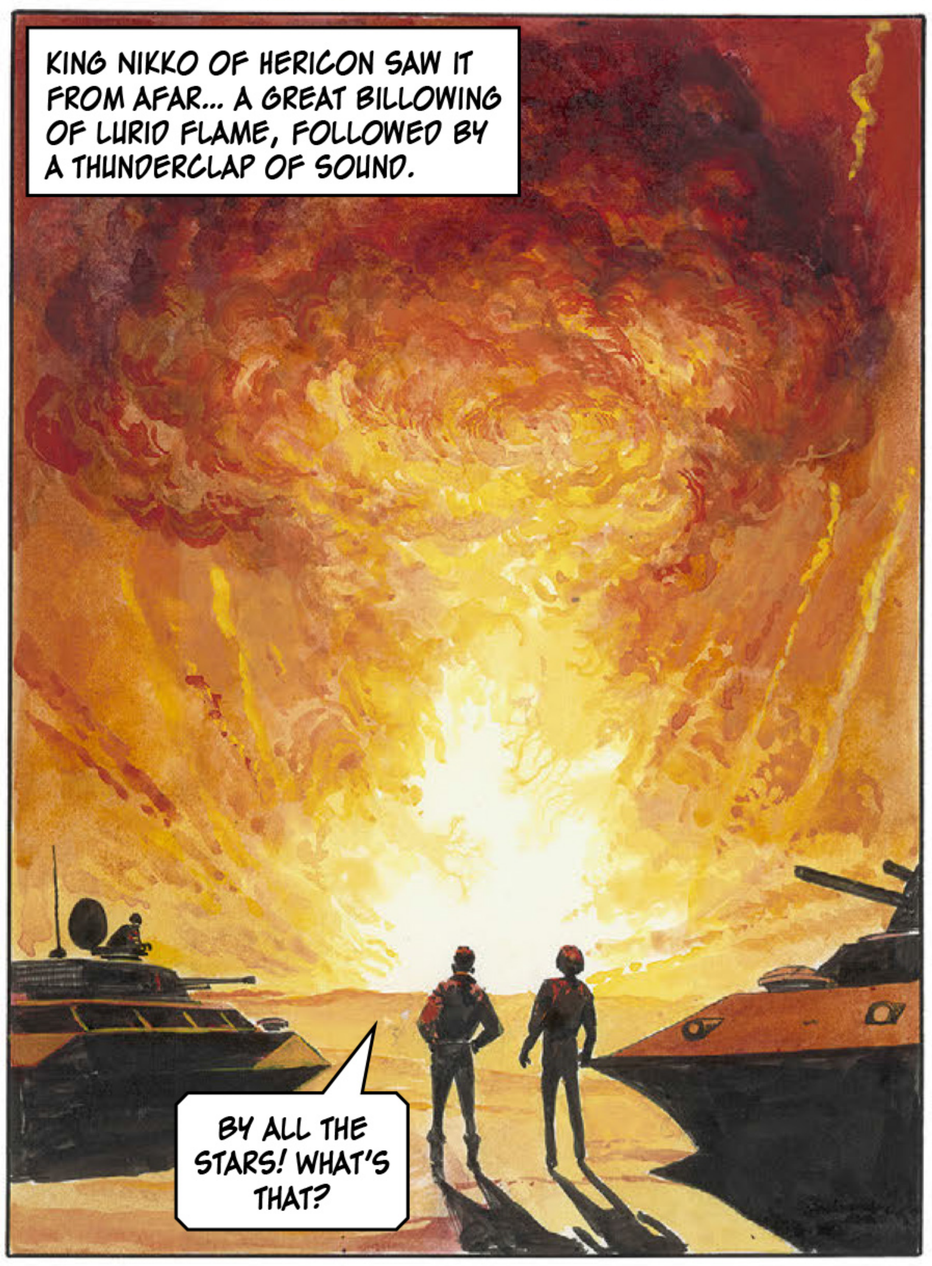
AND THEN...
AAAAAAAAH! STOP... STOP!


A WALL OF STAKES SPRANG UP AHEAD OF THE CRAFT!

THEN FOLLOWED CHAOS AND DISASTER!
AS SILENCE FELL OVER THE WRECKAGE, A PARTY OF ZUGG TRIBESMEN RODE OUT OF THE SHADOWS...
SET FIRE TO THE FUEL!

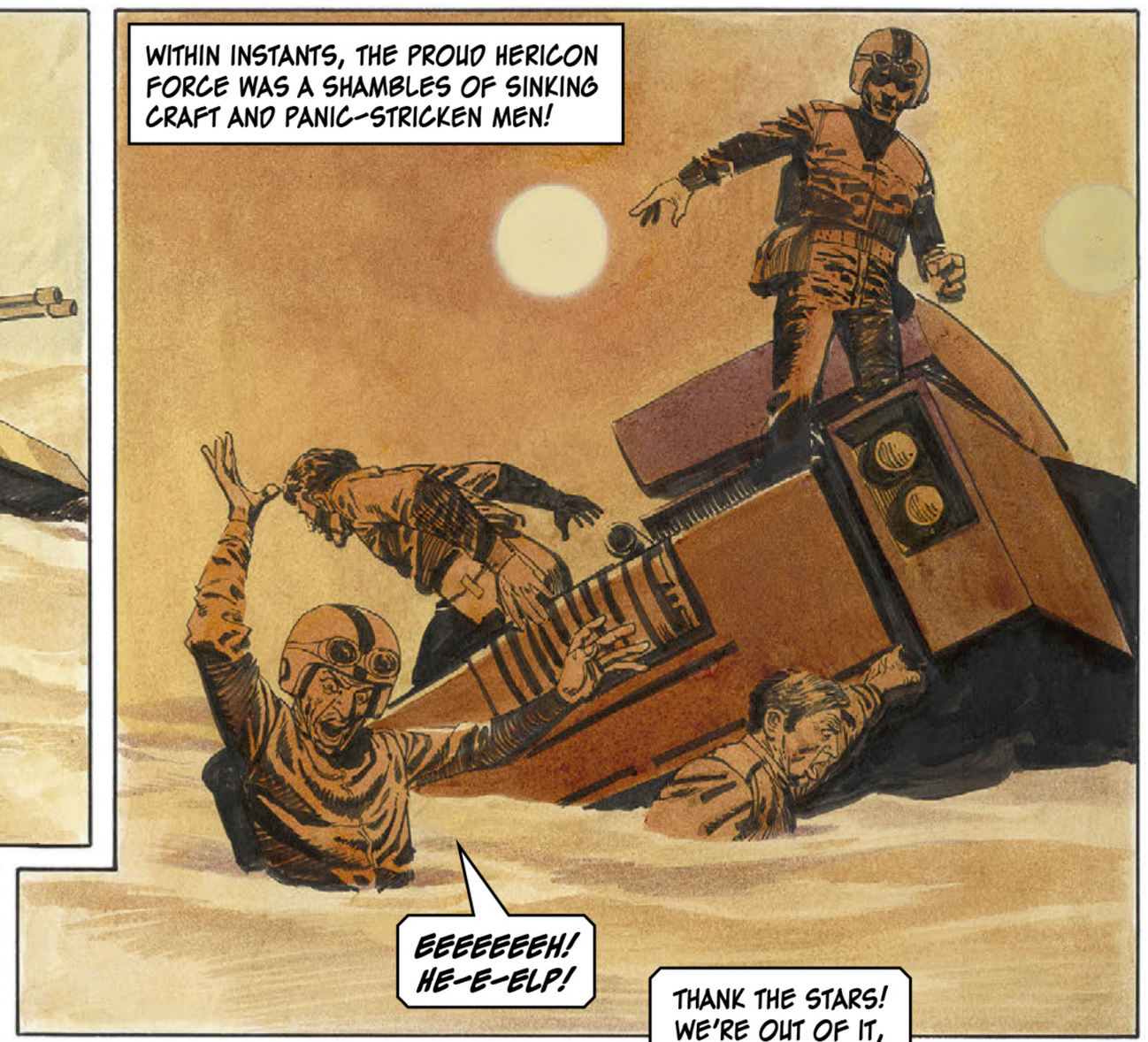

KING NIKKO OF HERICON SAW IT FROM AFAR... A GREAT BILLOWING OF LURID FLAME, FOLLOWED BY A THUNDERCLAP OF SOUND.
BY ALL THE STARS! WHAT'S THAT?

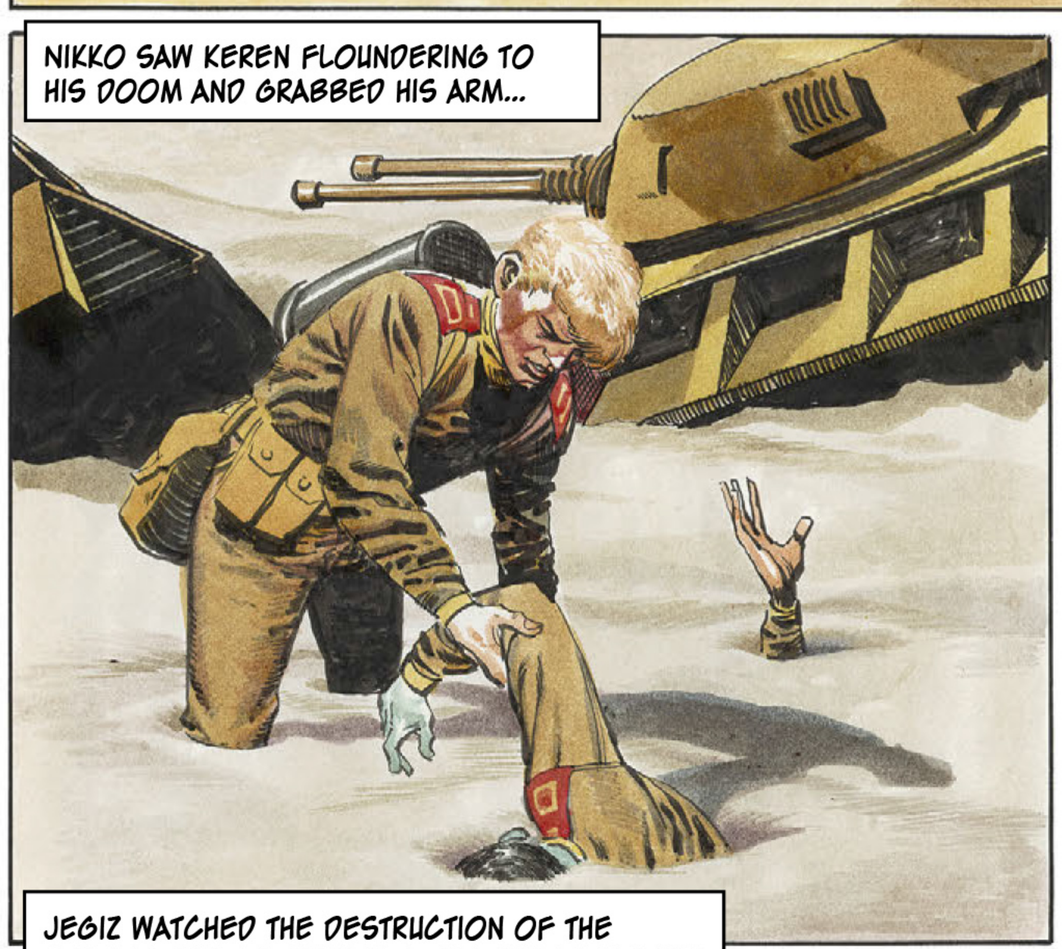
AN OFFICER REPLIED... WITH THE COLD FINGER OF FEAR TRAILING DOWN HIS SPINE.
I BELIEVE, SIRE, THAT WAS OUR FUEL BLOWING UP!

JANNO WAS WITH THE ZUGG LEADER. HE, TOO, SAW THE EXPLOSION... AND HE SHUDDERED AT JEGIZ'S MERCILESS WORDS...
TOMORROW WE'LL LEAD THEM A DANCE TILL THE REMAINDER OF THEIR FUEL HAS GONE... THEN WE'LL CLOSE IN FOR THE KILL!

AS DAWN BROKE OVER THE GREAT PLAIN, AN ALARM RANG OUT FROM THE GROUNDED HERICON COLUMN.
ZUGG FORCE IN SIGHT! HUNDREDS OF THEM!
THOUGH HIS FUEL WAS HALF GONE, NIKKO GAVE THE ORDER TO ATTACK. THE FIGHTING CRAFT STREAKED FORWARD, GUNS BLAZING...
WITH PROJECTILES BURSTING ALL ROUND THEM, THE ZUGGS WHEELED AND RODE INTO THE NARROW VALLEY... AND WERE SOON OUT OF SIGHT.
THE INCIDENT UNNERVED NIKKO. TAKING A DEEP DRAUGHT OF THE DEADLY GORBAL, HE SHOUTED ANOTHER WILD ORDER.
OPEN OUT INTO WIDE FORMATION AND INCREASE TO FULL SPEED! WE'LL SCOUT THE WHOLE PLAIN TILL WE FIND THOSE ACCURSED BARBARIANS!
THE RECKLESS DEMAND FOR FULL SPEED ATE UP THE PRECIOUS FUEL AT AN ALARMING RATE. FUEL TANKS WERE NEARLY EMPTY WHEN THEY SIGHTED ANOTHER MASS OF ZUGG CAVALRY.
WE HAVE THEM OUT IN THE OPEN! THEY CAN'T ESCAPE THIS TIME! ATTACK!
AND THEN... IT HAPPENED! ENGINES BEGAN TO SPLUTTER AS THE LAST DROPS OF FUEL WERE BURNT AWAY.
LAND IN FORMATION AND CONTINUE FIRING ON THE ENEMY!

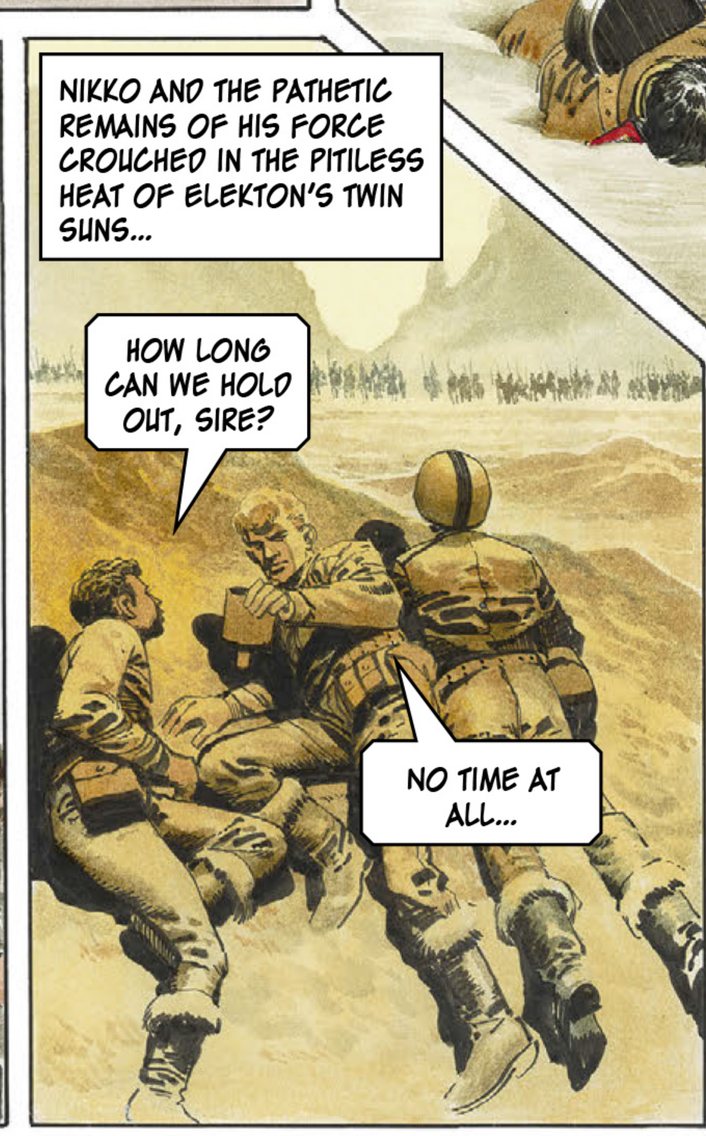
NO SOONER DID THE HEAVY, ARMOURED HOVERCRAFT TOUCH THE GROUND THAN THEY SUNK!
AAAAAH! WE'RE IN A QUICKSAND!


WITHIN INSTANTS, THE PROUD HERICON FORCE WAS A SHAMBLES OF SINKING CRAFT AND PANIC-STRICKEN MEN!
EEEEEEEH! HE-E-ELP!


NIKKO SAW KEREN FLOUNDERING TO HIS DOOM AND GRABBED HIS ARM...

PLUNGING THROUGH THE YIELDING SAND, THE YOUNG KING FELT HIS FEET TOUCH FIRM GROUND. HE STAGGERED TO SAFETY, DRAGGING HIS BURDEN BEHIND HIM.
THANK THE STARS! WE'RE OUT OF IT, KEREN!

JEGIZ WATCHED THE DESTRUCTION OF THE COLUMN FROM A DISTANCE. THE ZUGG LEADER'S FIERCE FACE CREASED IN A GRIN OF TRIUMPH.
THEY FELL INTO OUR TRAP, JEGIZ! SHALL WE CHARGE AND WIPE OUT THE SURVIVORS?
NOT YET! LET THEM ROAST IN THE MIDDAY SUNS FOR A WHILE TILL THEY ARE TOO WEAK TO FIGHT!


NIKKO AND THE PATHETIC REMAINS OF HIS FORCE CROUCHED IN THE PITILESS HEAT OF ELEKTON'S TWIN SUNS...
HOW LONG CAN WE HOLD OUT, SIRE?
NO TIME AT ALL...

LET'S HOPE THE BARBARIANS ATTACK AND FINISH IT... BEFORE WE ALL GO MAD WITH THIRST!

WHEN THE SEARING SUNS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON REACHED THEIR ZENITH, THE MIND OF ONE OF THE HERICONS SNAPPED...
AAAAAAAAAAH! WATER! GIVE ME WATER!
COME BACK, YOU FOOL!
IT WAS THEN THAT JANNO URGED HIS KREED FORWARD AT THE GALLOP... AWAY FROM THE ZUGGS AND TOWARDS THE DOOMED HERICONS.
DON'T SHOOT, HERICONS! IT'S ME... JANNO!
A ZUGG ARROW SILENCED THE MAN'S CRIES FOREVER.
ANOTHER ARROW WAS DRAWN BACK... BUT JEGIZ THE ZUGG LEADER STAYED THE BOWMAN'S HAND.
DIE, TRAITOR!
NO! HE SAVED MY LIFE... LET HIM GO TO HIS OWN PEOPLE.
REACHING THE SHALLOW HOLLOW, JANNO LEAPT TO THE GROUND AND CROUCHED BY THE ASTONISHED HERICONS.
JANNO! YOU DELIBERATELY CHOSE TO PERISH WITH US... AND AFTER WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
YES, MAJESTY!
NO MATTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE, I AM A CITIZEN OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND IT IS MY DUTY TO STAND AND DIE WITH MY EMPEROR'S SON!
THE POISONOUS FUMES OF GORBAL WERE CLEARING FROM THE MINDS OF NIKKO AND HIS COMPANIONS...
WHY DID I BEGIN THIS MAD, EVIL WAR?
SIRE! YOU ORDERED... AND WE WERE GLAD TO OBEY! AND NOW WE MUST ALL PAY THE PRICE!

AND THEN...
LOOK! THE ZUGGS ARE RIDING OFF!
JEGIZ, THE ZUGG LEADER, WHEELED HIS KREED AND CAST ONE GLANCE BACKWARDS.
I WILL SPARE THEM ALL... FOR THE SAKE OF THE ONE CALLED JANNO, WHO BRAVELY CHOSE TO BE WITH THEM! NEVER AGAIN WILL THE HERICONS DEFILE OUR HUNTING GROUNDS!
HARDLY ABLE TO BELIEVE THEIR GOOD FORTUNE, NIKKO AND THE OTHER SURVIVORS DRAGGED THEMSELVES TO THEIR FEET... AND SET OFF ACROSS THE GREAT PLAIN.
THREE LUNAR MONTHS LATER, A GROUP OF BEDRAGGLED FIGURES STAGGERED INTO THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL CHAMBER OF TRIGAN CITY.
BY ALL THE STARS!
THE YOUNG KING OF HERICON PROSTRATED HIMSELF BEFORE THE EMPEROR.
MY FATHER... I BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS FOR MY CRIMES...
THERE IS NOTHING TO FORGIVE, NIKKO! YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME FOR WHAT YOU DID!
I- I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
THE EMPEROR EXPLAINED... AND A COLD CHILL OF FEAR RAN THROUGH THE BODIES OF NIKKO AND HIS COMPANIONS WHEN THEY HEARD OF THE FATE THEY HAD SO NARROWLY ESCAPED.
PERIC, HERE, HAS DISCOVERED THE SOURCE OF THE EVIL! HE FOUND THE BEVERAGE GORBAL TO BE CONTAMINATED WITH A STRANGE POISON WHICH AFFECTED YOUR MINDS AND WOULD HAVE EVENTUALLY KILLED YOU!
FROM THAT DAY, GORBAL WAS NEVER DRUNK ON THE PLANET ELEKTON!

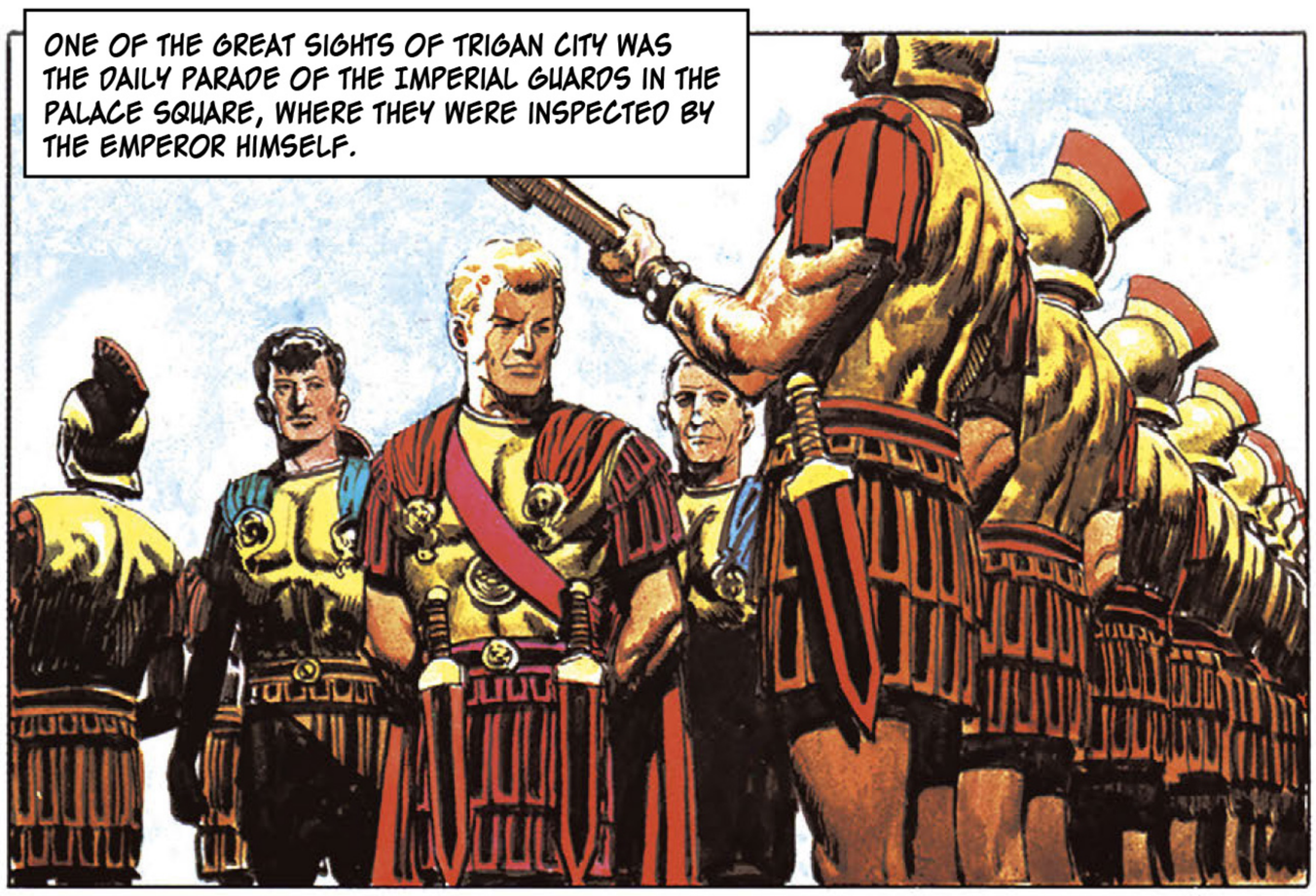
XVI

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE LOST CITY

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 371-382

22nd February – 10th May 1969

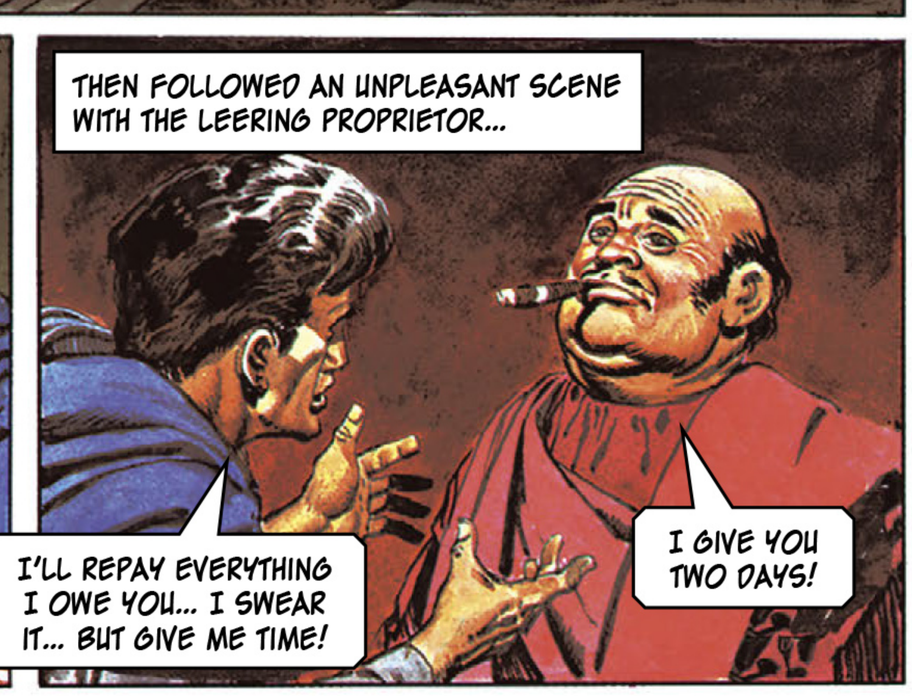

ONE OF THE GREAT SIGHTS OF TRIGAN CITY WAS THE DAILY PARADE OF THE IMPERIAL GUARDS IN THE PALACE SQUARE, WHERE THEY WERE INSPECTED BY THE EMPEROR HIMSELF.

THE INSPECTION OVER, TRIGO ACKNOWLEDGED THE SALUTE OF THE GUARD COMMANDER.
I THANK YOU, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
MY CONGRATULATIONS, CAPTAIN. YOUR MEN DO YOU CREDIT AS EVER!

TRIGO REMARKED TO HIS BROTHER, BRAG...
CAPTAIN ZENO IS A GOOD OFFICER. I'D LIKE YOU TO KEEP HIM IN MIND FOR SPEEDY PROMOTION.
YES... HE'LL END UP AS A GENERAL, LIKE HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM.

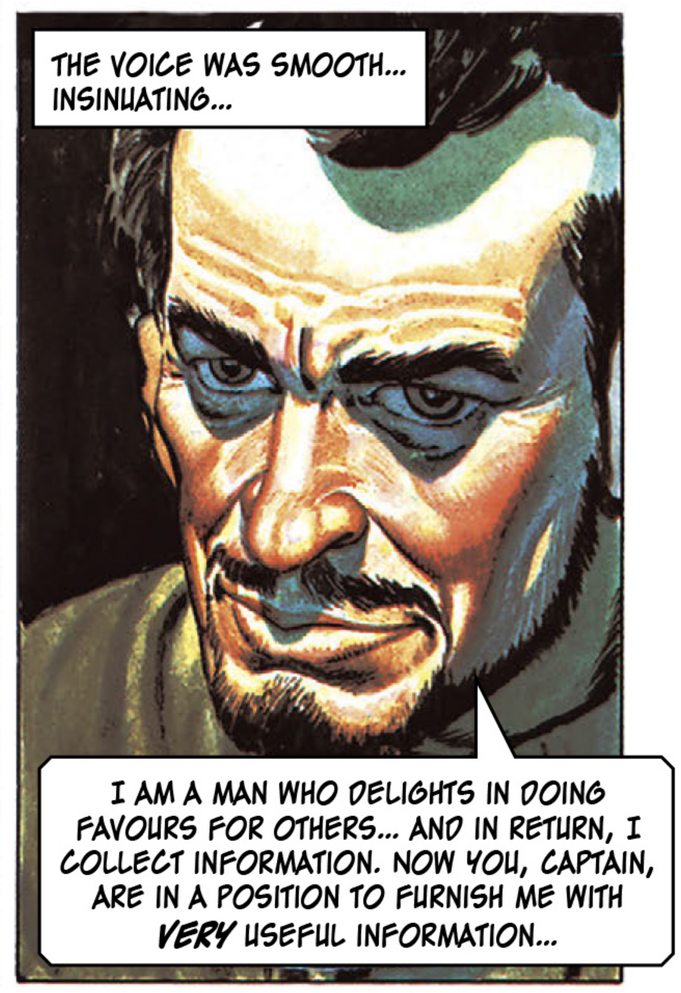
THAT NIGHT, WHEN HE HAD FINISHED DUTY, THE EFFICIENT CAPTAIN ZENO CHANGED INTO CIVILIAN CLOTHES AND LEFT THE PALACE BY A BACK DOOR.
IF ANYONE FOUND OUT... MY CAREER WOULD BE FINISHED!
IN A DISREPUTABLE PART OF THE CITY, HE DESCENDED INTO A CELLAR GIVEN OVER TO BANGORA-A GAMBLING GAME FORBIDDEN BY TRIGAN LAW...
GOOD EVENING, CAPTAIN. I HOPE YOU WILL HAVE BETTER LUCK TONIGHT.
DON'T CALL ME CAPTAIN, CURSE YOU!

GAMBLING WAS AN OBSESSION WITH ZENO. HE PLAYED RECKLESSLY THAT NIGHT-AND...
YOU LOSE!
OH, NO... NO!

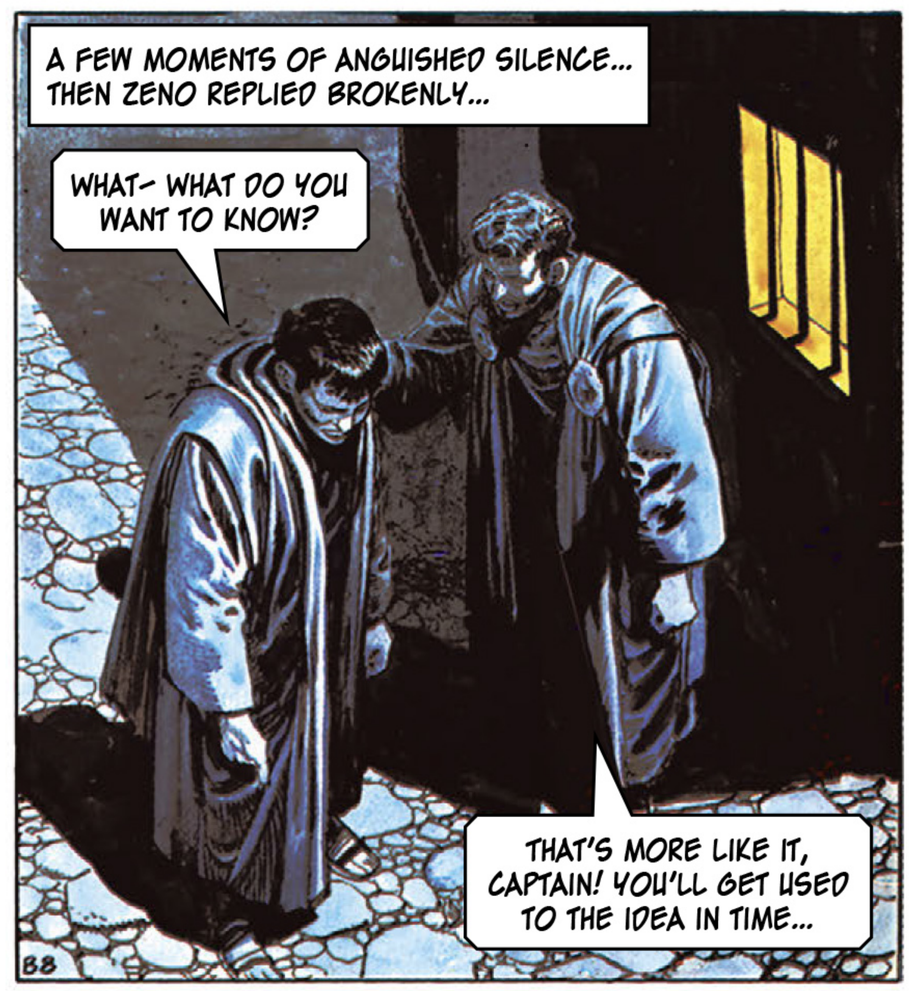

THEN FOLLOWED AN UNPLEASANT SCENE WITH THE LEERING PROPRIETOR...
I'LL REPAY EVERYTHING I OWE YOU... I SWEAR IT... BUT GIVE ME TIME!
I GIVE YOU TWO DAYS!

A LITTLE LATER, ZENO STUMBLED OUT INTO THE DARKENED STREET... AND A VOICE GREETED HIM FROM THE SHADOWS
CAPTAIN! A WORD WITH YOU!
WHO ARE YOU?

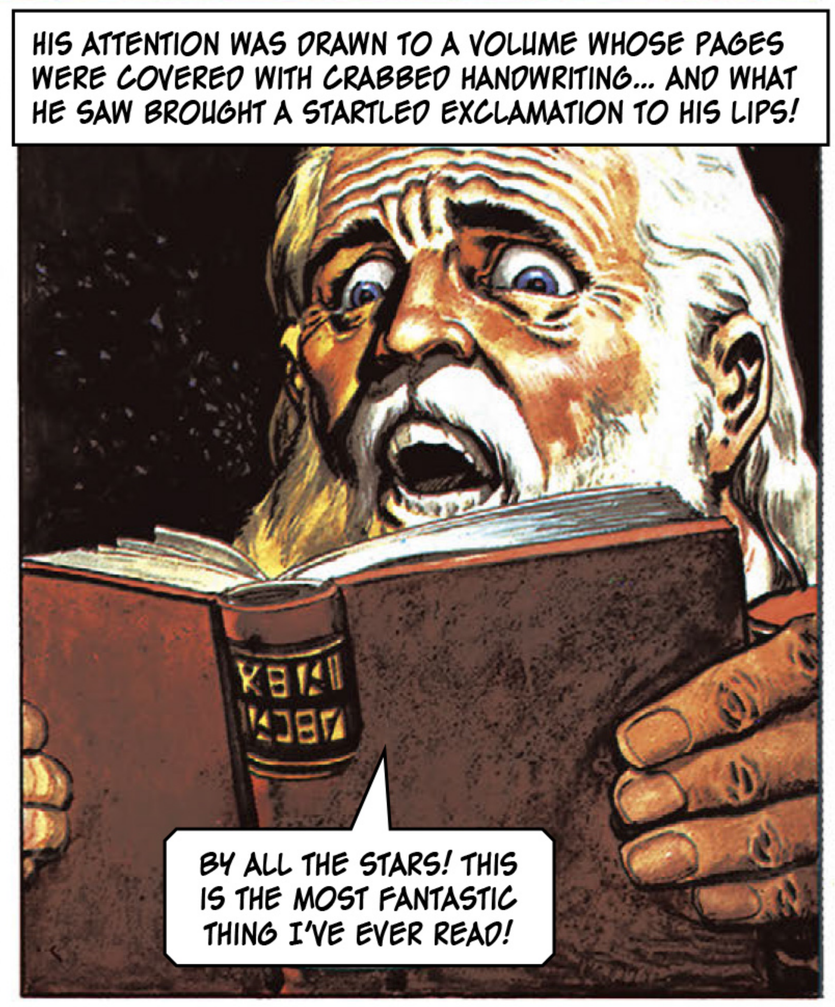
MY NAME IS OF NO CONCERN. WHAT WILL INTEREST YOU IS THAT I HAVE JUST PAID YOUR DEBT... IN FULL!
YOU... YOU DID THAT? WHY?

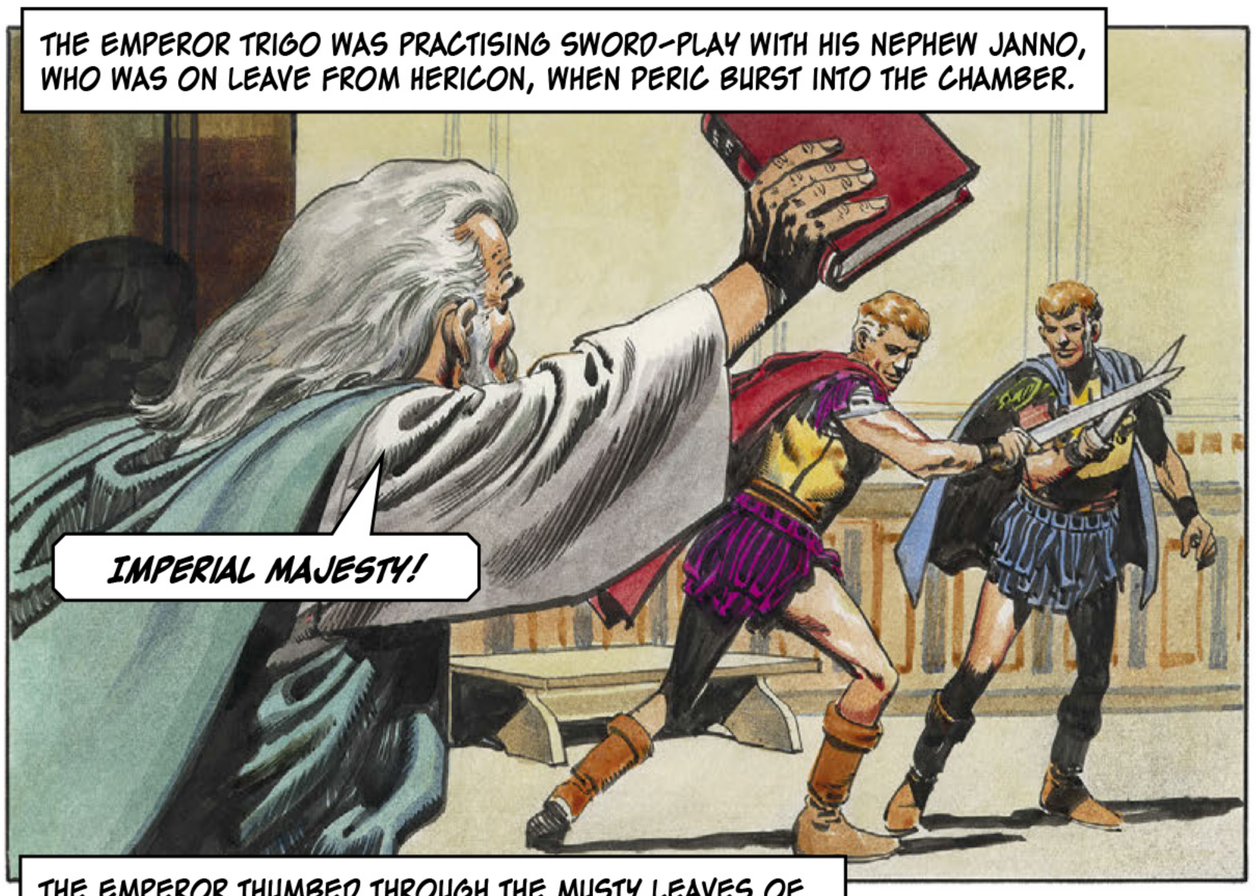

THE VOICE WAS SMOOTH... INSINUATING...
I AM A MAN WHO DELIGHTS IN DOING FAVOURS FOR OTHERS... AND IN RETURN, I COLLECT INFORMATION. NOW YOU, CAPTAIN, ARE IN A POSITION TO FURNISH ME WITH VERY USEFUL INFORMATION...

ZENO WAS QUICK-WITTED ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT HIS STRANGE "FRIEND" WAS TALKING ABOUT.
A SPY! BY THE STARS, IF I WERE CARRYING A SWORD, I'D...
AH, YES! I KNOW YOU ARE FROM A VERY FINE MILITARY FAMILY. I WONDER WHAT YOUR FATHER, THE GENERAL, WOULD THINK OF HIS SON WHO INCURS ENORMOUS GAMBLING DEBTS.


A FEW MOMENTS OF ANGUISHED SILENCE... THEN ZENO REPLIED BROKENLY...
WHAT- WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT, CAPTAIN! YOU'LL GET USED TO THE IDEA IN TIME...

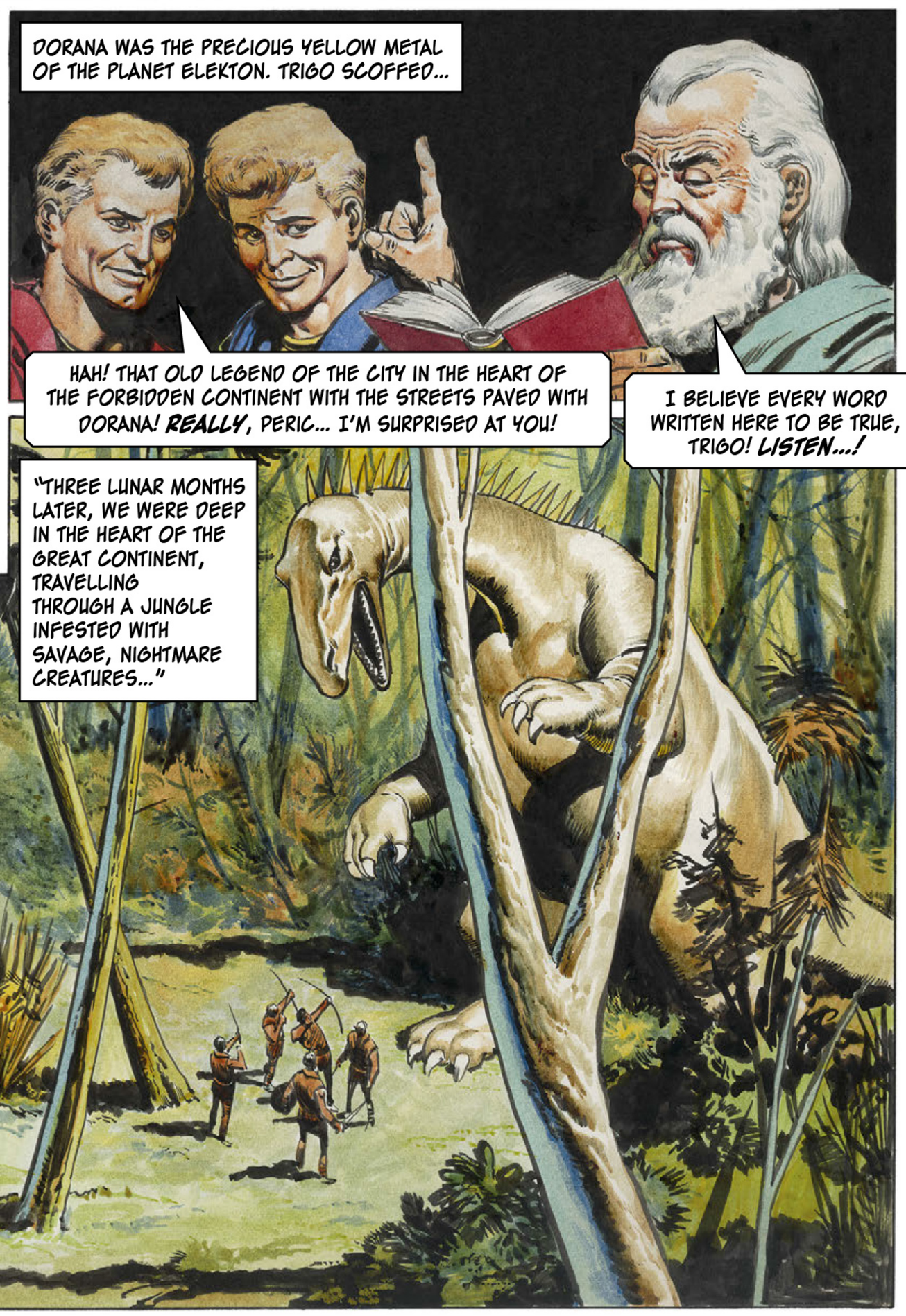
SOME DAYS LATER, THE EMPEROR'S TRUSTED FRIEND PERIC, THE SCIENTIST, WAS BROWSING AT A BOOKSTALL IN THE CITY MARKET.

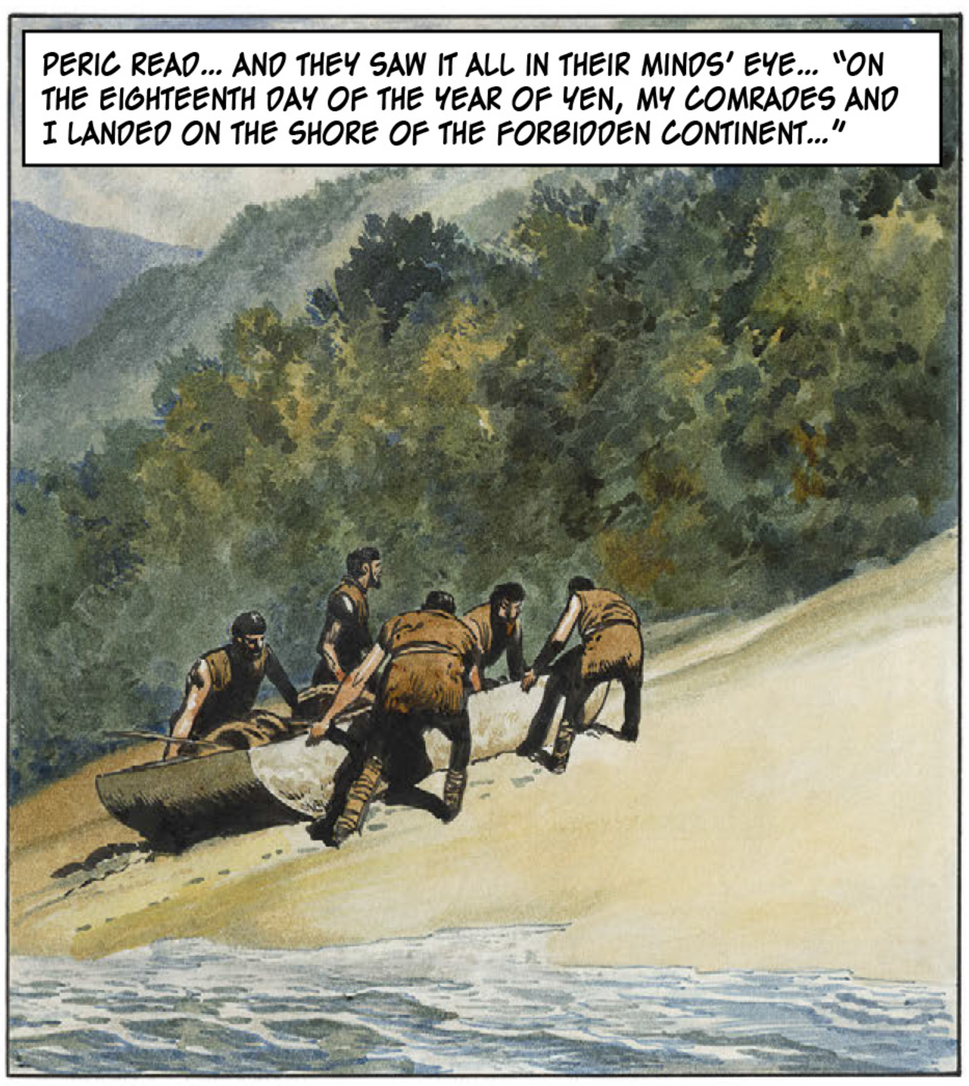

HIS ATTENTION WAS DRAWN TO A VOLUME WHOSE PAGES WERE COVERED WITH CRABBED HANDWRITING... AND WHAT HE SAW BROUGHT A STARTLED EXCLAMATION TO HIS LIPS!
BY ALL THE STARS! THIS IS THE MOST FANTASTIC THING I'VE EVER READ!

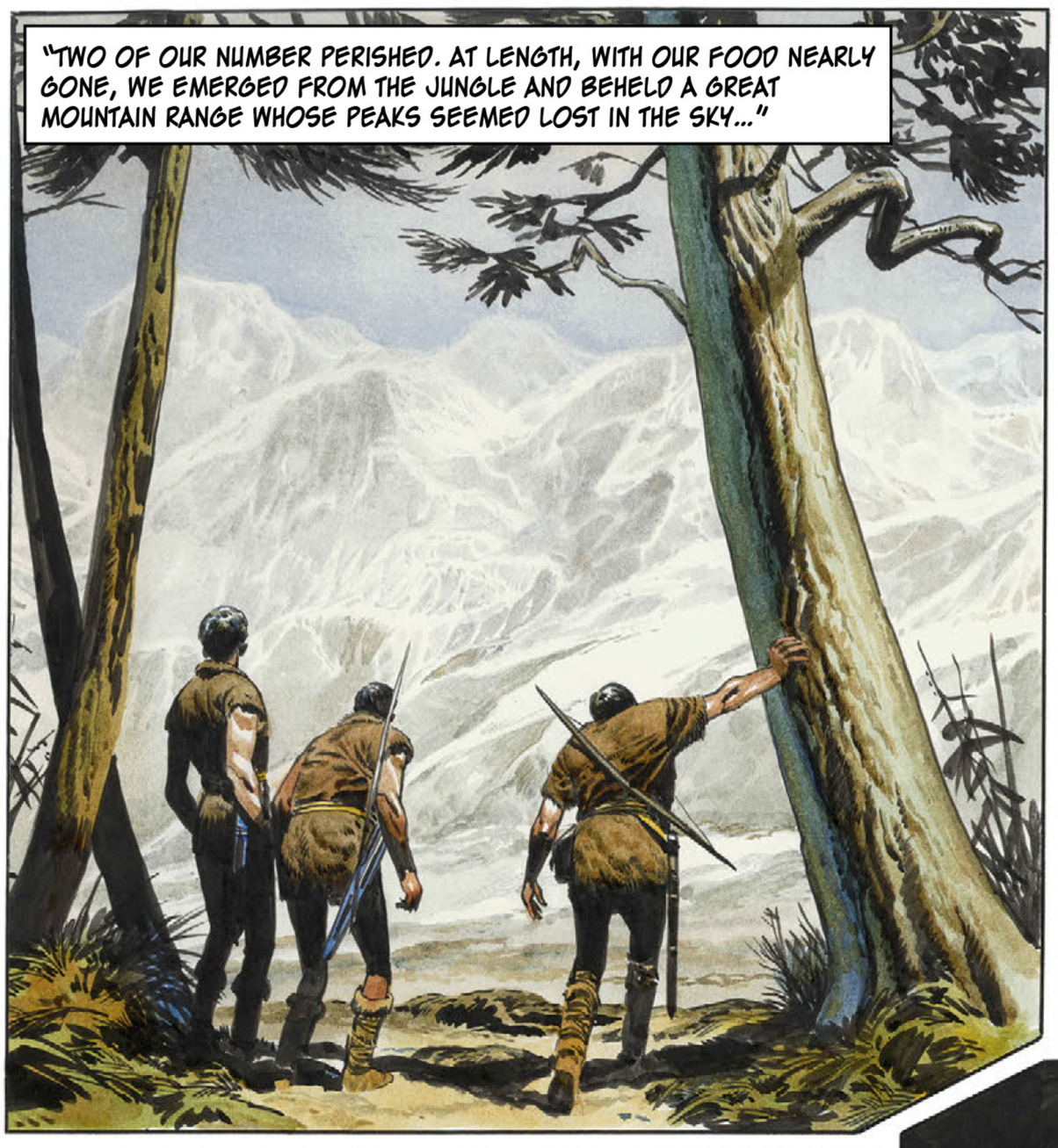

THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS PRACTISING SWORD-PLAY WITH HIS NEPHEW JANNO, WHO WAS ON LEAVE FROM HERICON, WHEN PERIC BURST INTO THE CHAMBER.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY!

TRIGO LOWERED HIS BLADE AND SMILED RUEFULLY AT HIS OLD FRIEND.
YOUR PARDON, TRIGO... BUT I HAD TO SEE YOU AT ONCE ABOUT... THIS!

THE EMPEROR THUMBED THROUGH THE MUSTY LEAVES OF THE OLD BOOK WHICH PERIC HAD BOUGHT IN THE MARKET...
IS IT OF INTEREST THEN? I CAN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD THAT'S WRITTEN HERE.
THE WRITING IS IN THE ANCIENT VORG LANGUAGE. IT IS A JOURNAL OF EXPLORATION... TO THE LOST CITY OF DORANA!

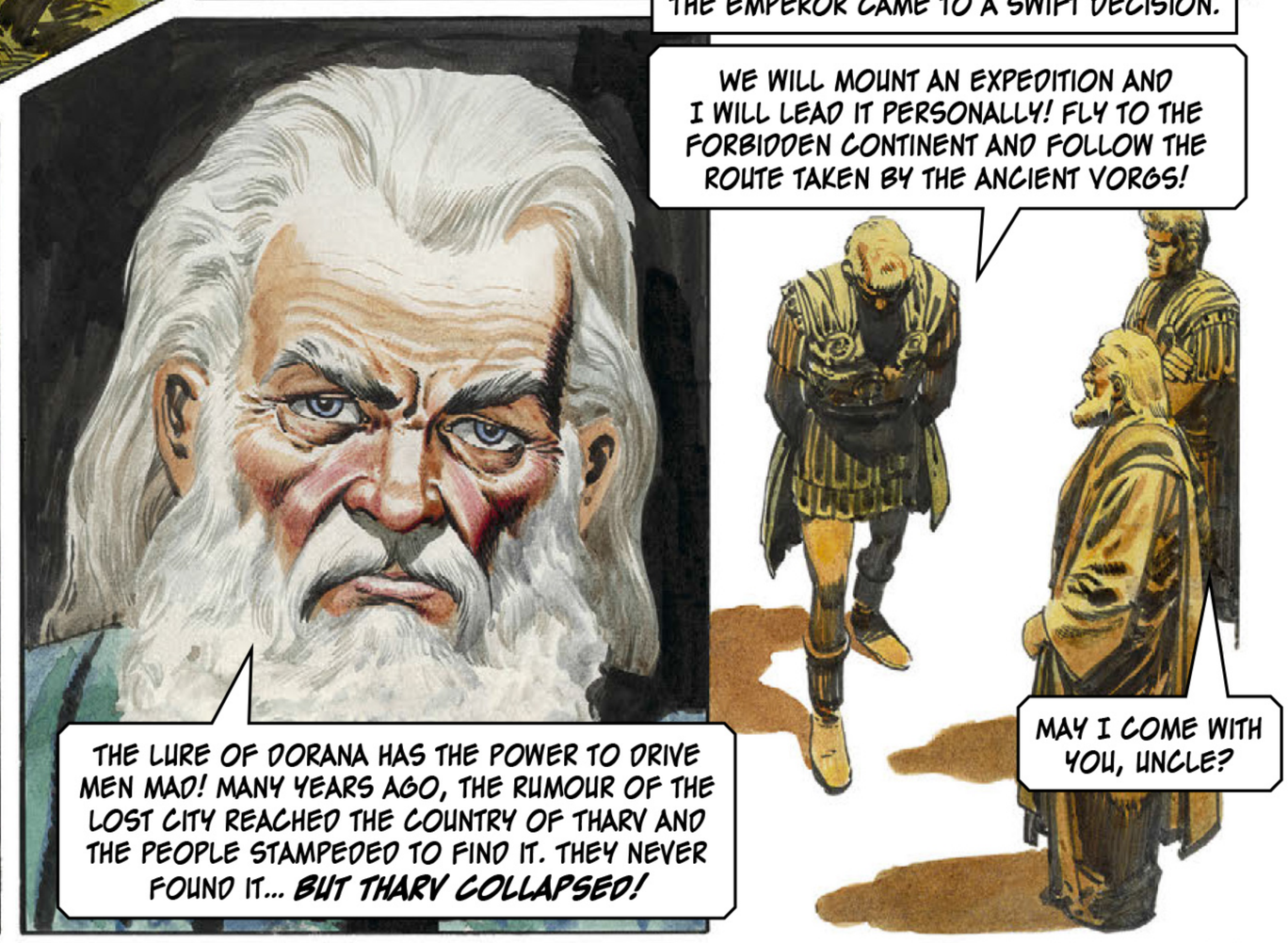

DORANA WAS THE PRECIOUS YELLOW METAL OF THE PLANET ELEKTON. TRIGO SCOFFED...
HAH! THAT OLD LEGEND OF THE CITY IN THE HEART OF THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT WITH THE STREETS PAVED WITH DORANA! REALLY, PERIC... I'M SURPRISED AT YOU!
I BELIEVE EVERY WORD WRITTEN HERE TO BE TRUE, TRIGO! LISTEN...!
"THREE LUNAR MONTHS LATER, WE WERE DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE GREAT CONTINENT, TRAVELLING THROUGH A JUNGLE INFESTED WITH SAVAGE, NIGHTMARE CREATURES..."


PERIC READ... AND THEY SAW IT ALL IN THEIR MINDS' EYE... "ON THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE YEAR OF YEN, MY COMRADES AND I LANDED ON THE SHORE OF THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT..."


"TWO OF OUR NUMBER PERISHED. AT LENGTH, WITH OUR FOOD NEARLY GONE, WE EMERGED FROM THE JUNGLE AND BEHELD A GREAT MOUNTAIN RANGE WHOSE PEAKS SEEMED LOST IN THE SKY..."

"MANY DAYS OF AGONY BROUGHT US TO THE CREST OF THE MOUNTAIN, WHERE WE FELL ON OUR KNEES AND GAZED DOWN IN AWE AND WONDER AT WHAT WE SAW BEYOND..."
THE LOST CITY OF DORANA!

THERE WAS MORE-MUCH MORE-AND WHEN PERIC HAD FINISHED, TRIGO'S FACE WAS GRAVE.
IF THIS IS TRUE, YOU REALISE THE IMPLICATIONS, PERIC?
YES, TRIGO! AT ALL COSTS, THIS INFORMATION MUST BE KEPT SECRET!


THE EMPEROR CAME TO A SWIFT DECISION.
WE WILL MOUNT AN EXPEDITION AND I WILL LEAD IT PERSONALLY! FLY TO THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT AND FOLLOW THE ROUTE TAKEN BY THE ANCIENT VORGS!
THE LURE OF DORANA HAS THE POWER TO DRIVE MEN MAD! MANY YEARS AGO, THE RUMOUR OF THE LOST CITY REACHED THE COUNTRY OF THARV AND THE PEOPLE STAMPEDED TO FIND IT. THEY NEVER FOUND IT... BUT THARV COLLAPSED!
MAY I COME WITH YOU, UNCLE?

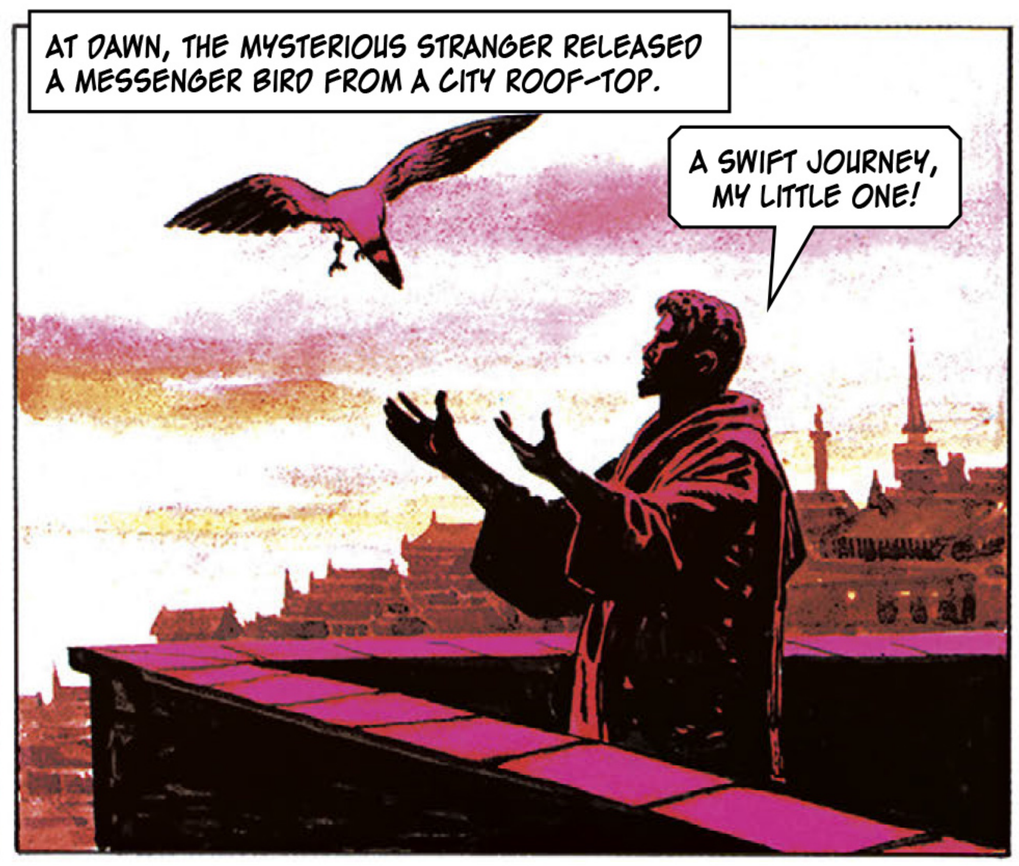
YES, JANNO, YOU MAY COME... AND YOUR FATHER. AND WE SHALL NEED ONE OTHER... A MAN WE CAN TRUST... I HAVE IT! CAPTAIN ZENO OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD!

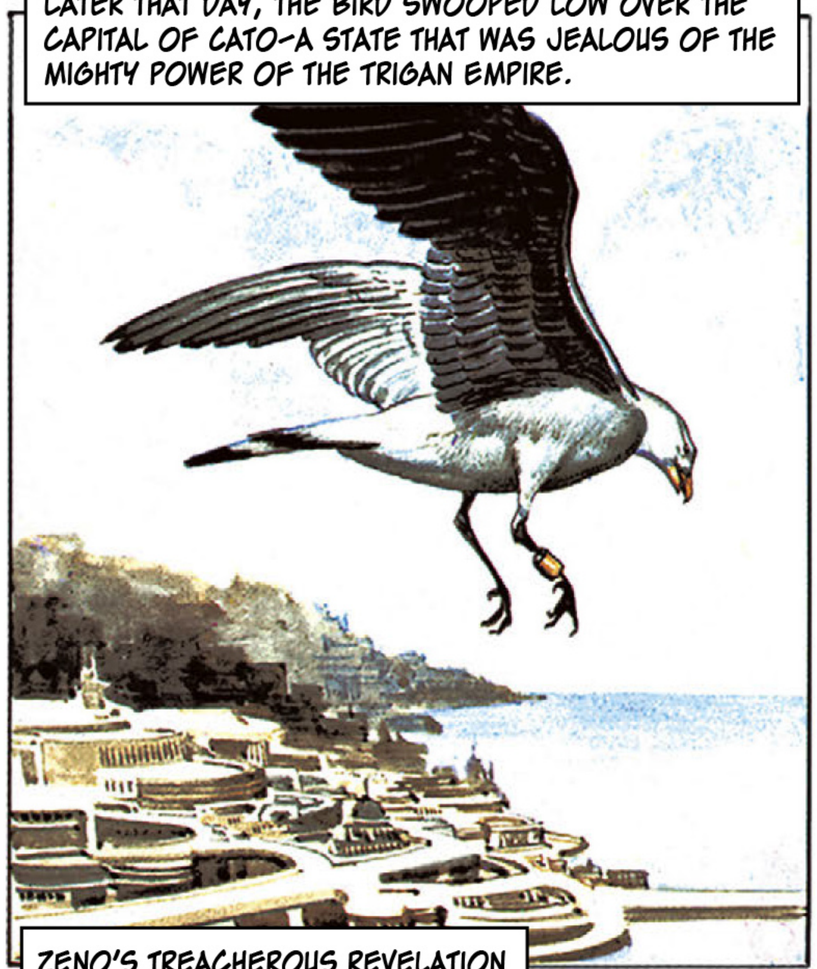
A FEW NIGHTS LATER, CAPTAIN ZENO KEPT AN APPOINTMENT WITH A SINISTER STRANGER AT AN INN IN A DISREPUTABLE PART OF THE CITY...
YOU HAVE SOMETHING OF INTEREST TO TELL ME, MY FRIEND?
YES! BUT THIS TIME YOU'LL PAY ME IN ADVANCE!

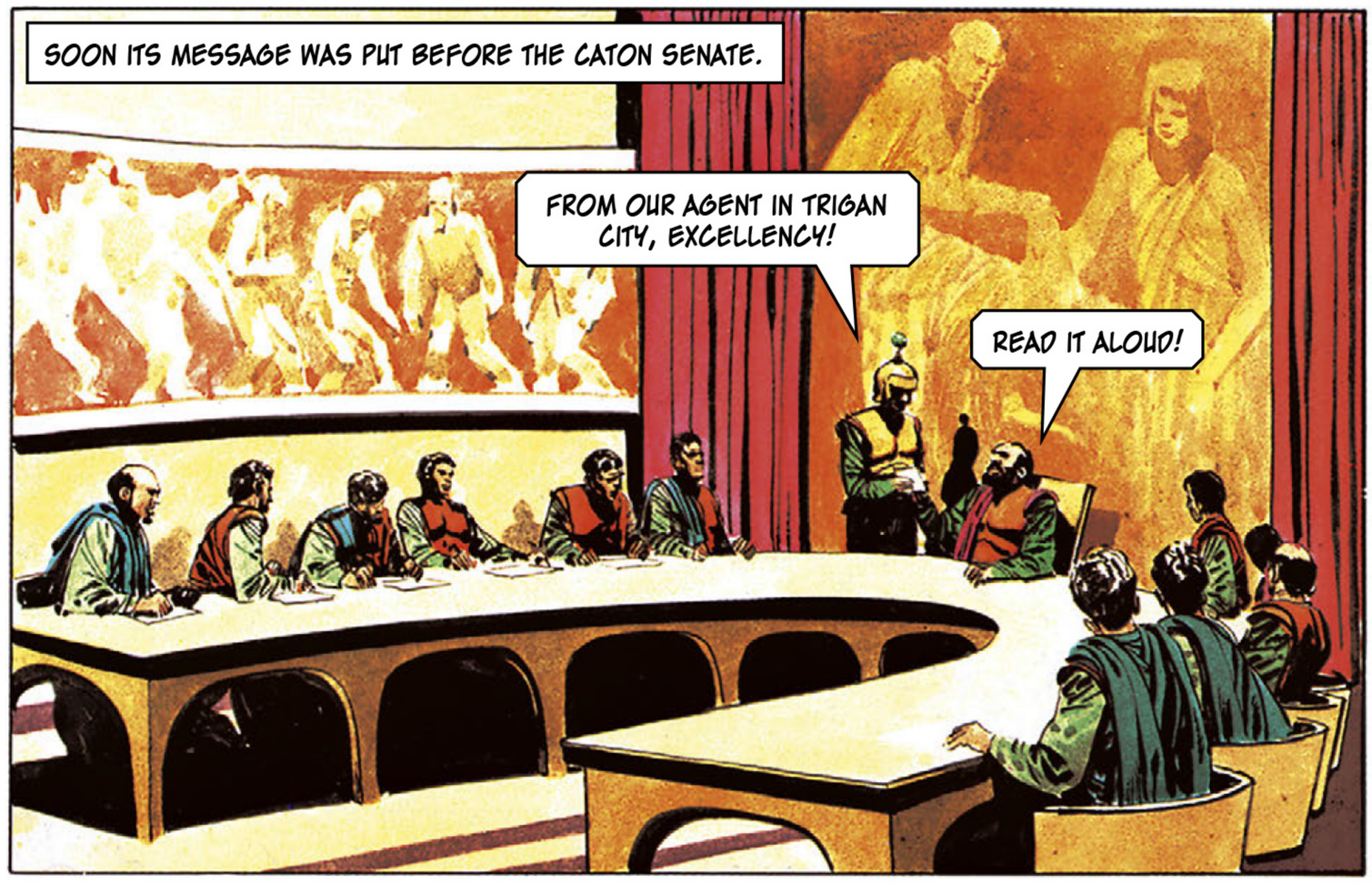
THE STRANGER TOSSED A PURSE OF MONEY ACROSS THE TABLE... AND THEN...
THE EMPEROR IS LEADING A SECRET EXPEDITION TO THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT!
BY THE STARS!

ZENO AND THE STRANGER PARTED COMPANY OUTSIDE THE INN.
FAREWELL, CAPTAIN. YOU HAVE DONE WELL!

ZENO RETRACED HIS STEPS TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE, HIS MIND IN A WHIRL.
I HAVE BETRAYED MY EMPEROR!

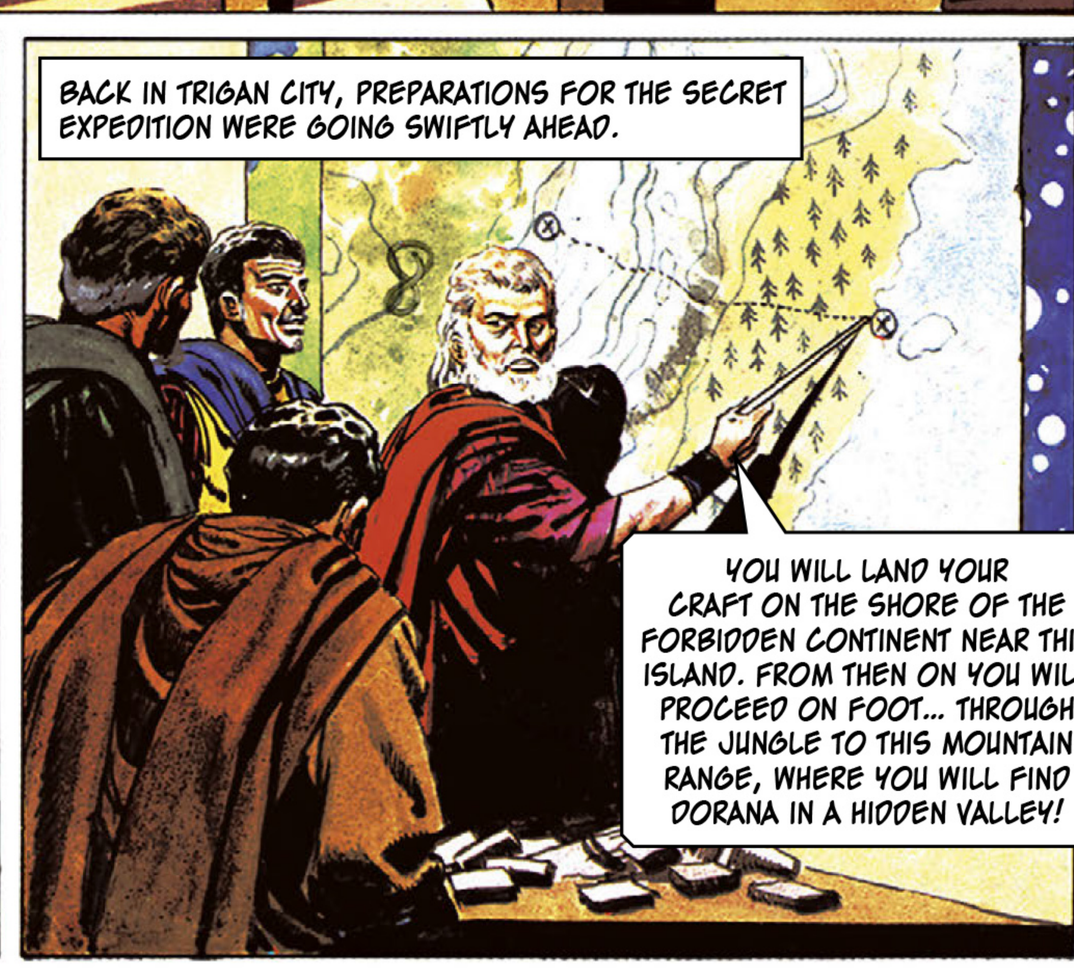

AT DAWN, THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER RELEASED A MESSENGER BIRD FROM A CITY ROOF-TOP.
A SWIFT JOURNEY, MY LITTLE ONE!


LATER THAT DAY, THE BIRD SWOOPED LOW OVER THE CAPITAL OF CATO-A STATE THAT WAS JEALOUS OF THE MIGHTY POWER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.

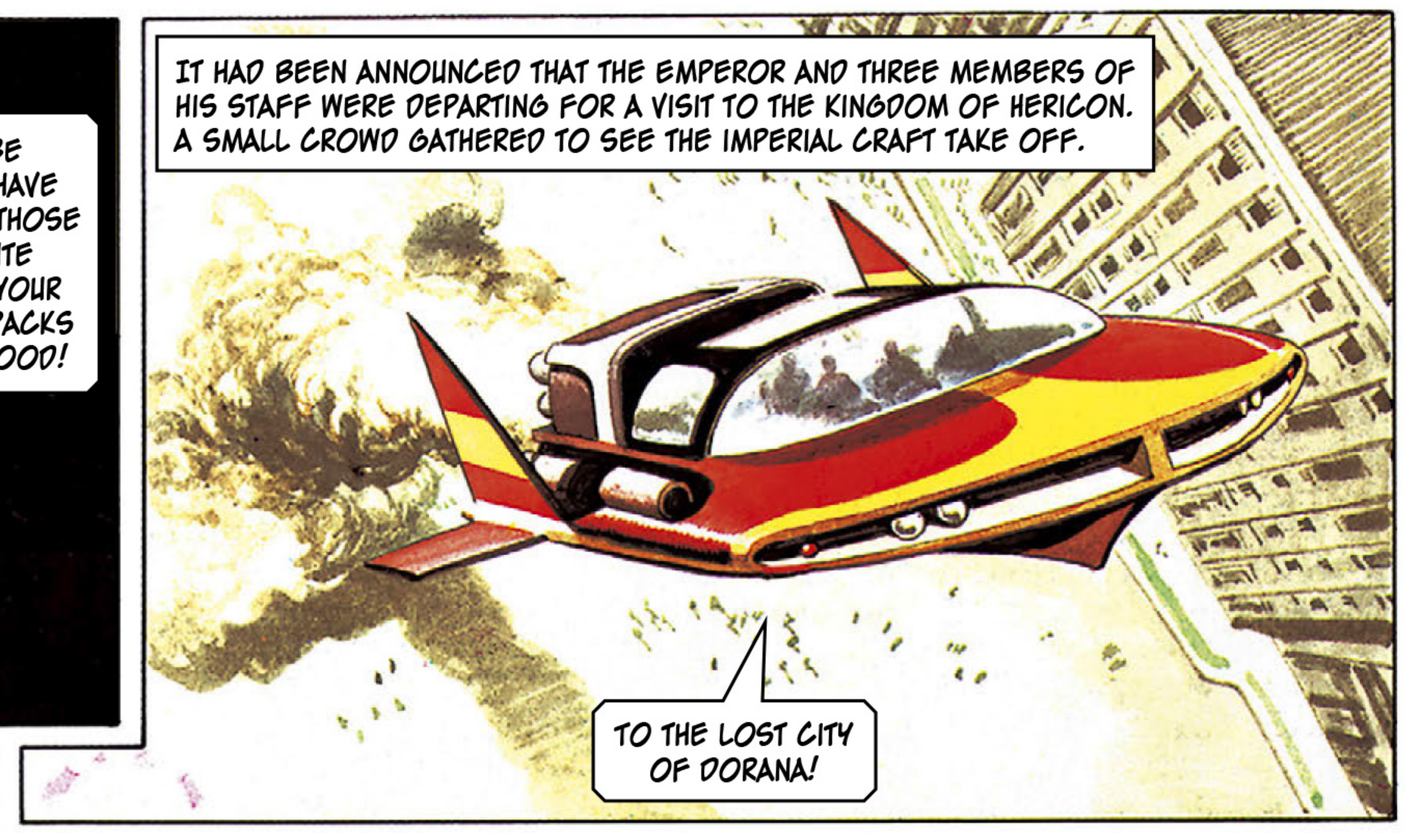

SOON ITS MESSAGE WAS PUT BEFORE THE CATON SENATE.
FROM OUR AGENT IN TRIGAN CITY, EXCELLENCY!
READ IT ALOUD!

ZENO'S TREACHEROUS REVELATION CAUSED A SENSATION!
A SECRET EXPEDITION TO THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT? THAT CAN MEAN ONLY ONE THING... TRIGO IS SEEKING THE LOST CITY OF DORANA!
HE MUST BE MAD TO BELIEVE IN THAT OLD LEGEND!

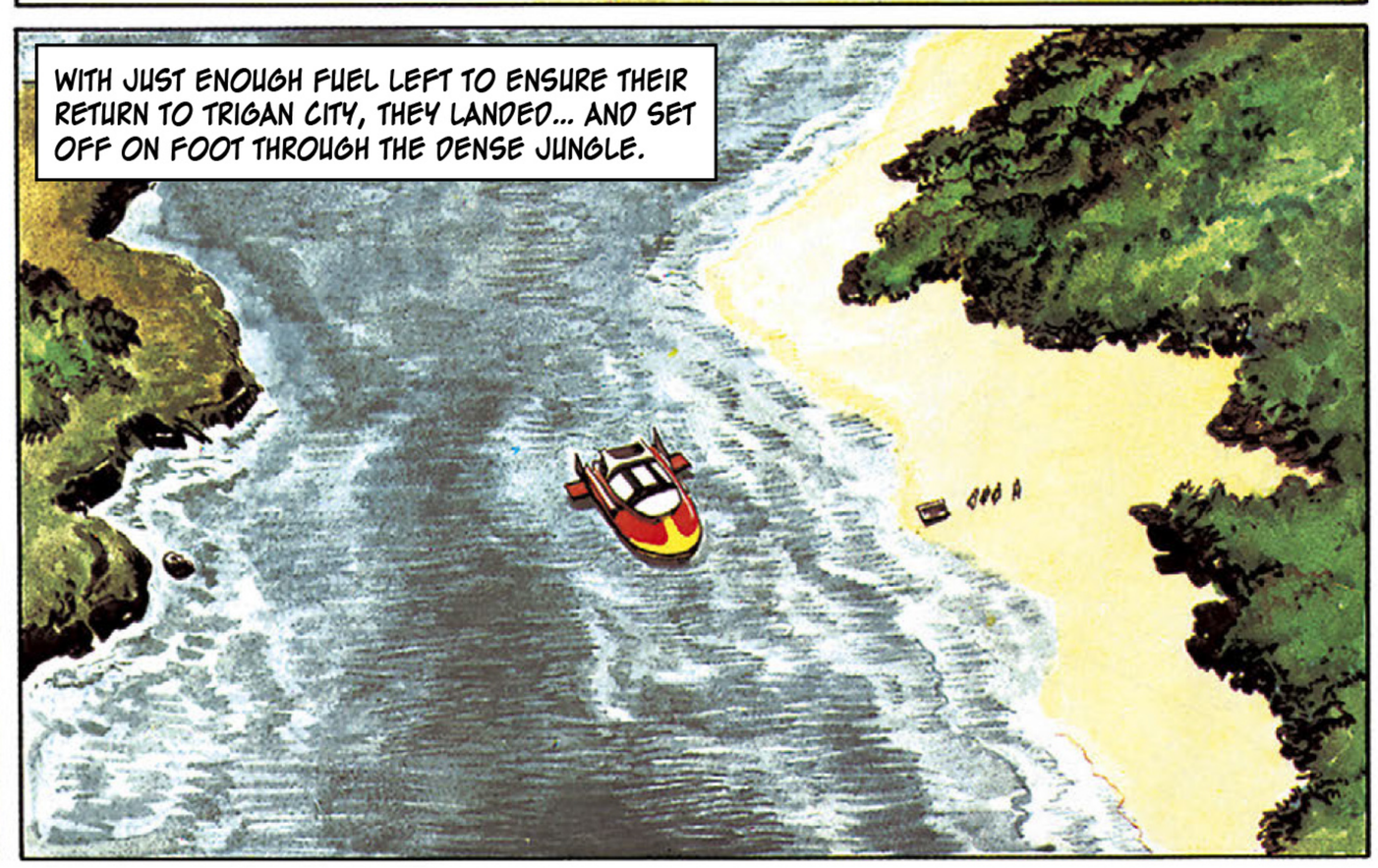
THE PRESIDENT SILENCED THE TURMOIL.
ENOUGH! TRIGO IS NO MADMAN! HE MUST HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT DORANA. WE'LL GET IT FROM HIM... BY FORCE!

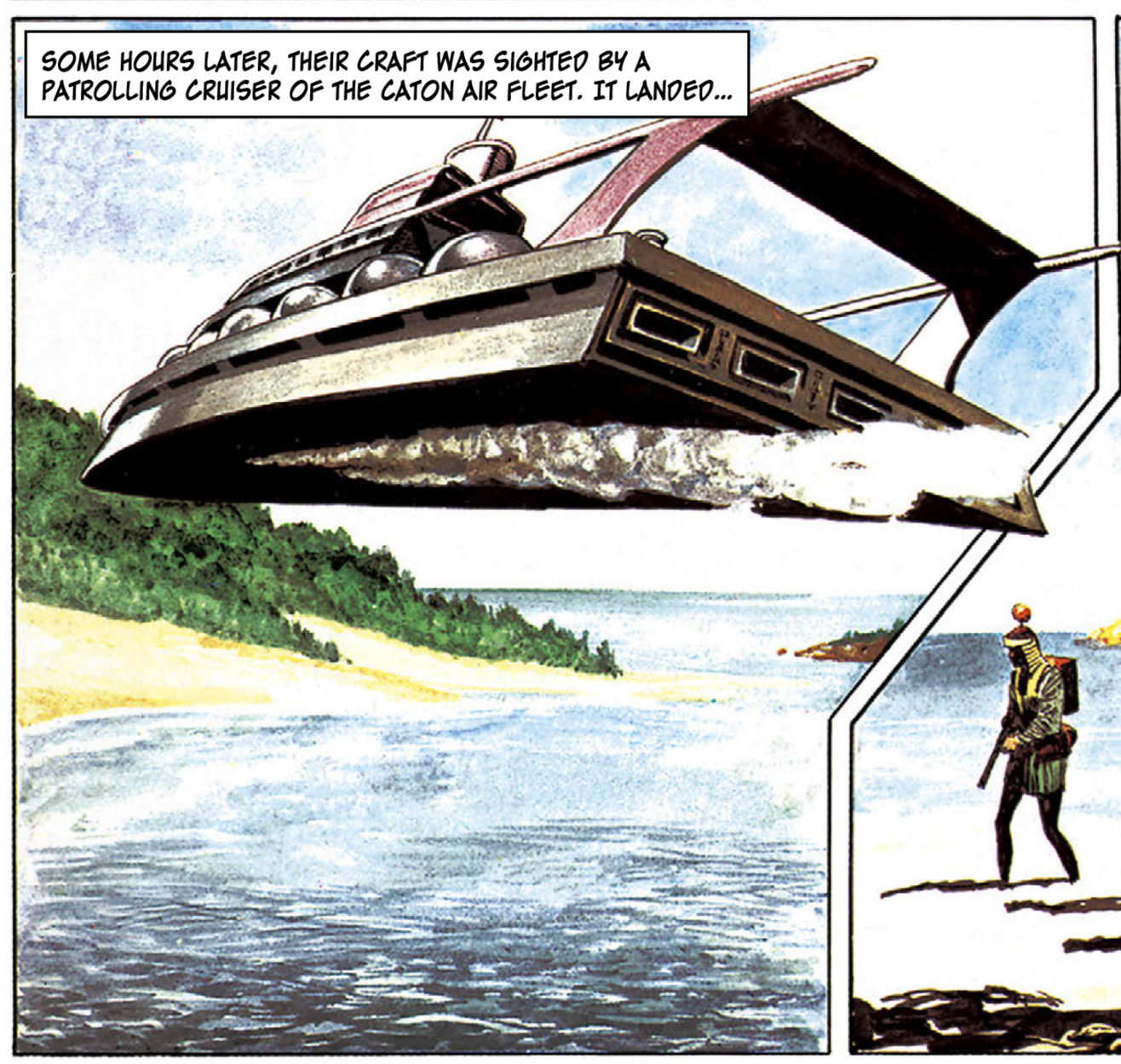

BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECRET EXPEDITION WERE GOING SWIFTLY AHEAD.
YOU WILL LAND YOUR CRAFT ON THE SHORE OF THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT NEAR THIS ISLAND. FROM THEN ON YOU WILL PROCEED ON FOOT... THROUGH THE JUNGLE TO THIS MOUNTAIN RANGE, WHERE YOU WILL FIND DORANA IN A HIDDEN VALLEY!

OLD PERIC ADDED GRIMLY...
THE PERILS WILL BE MANY BUT YOU WILL HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OVER THOSE WHO TROD THE ROUTE BEFORE YOU... WITH YOUR FIREARMS AND YOUR PACKS OF CONCENTRATED FOOD!

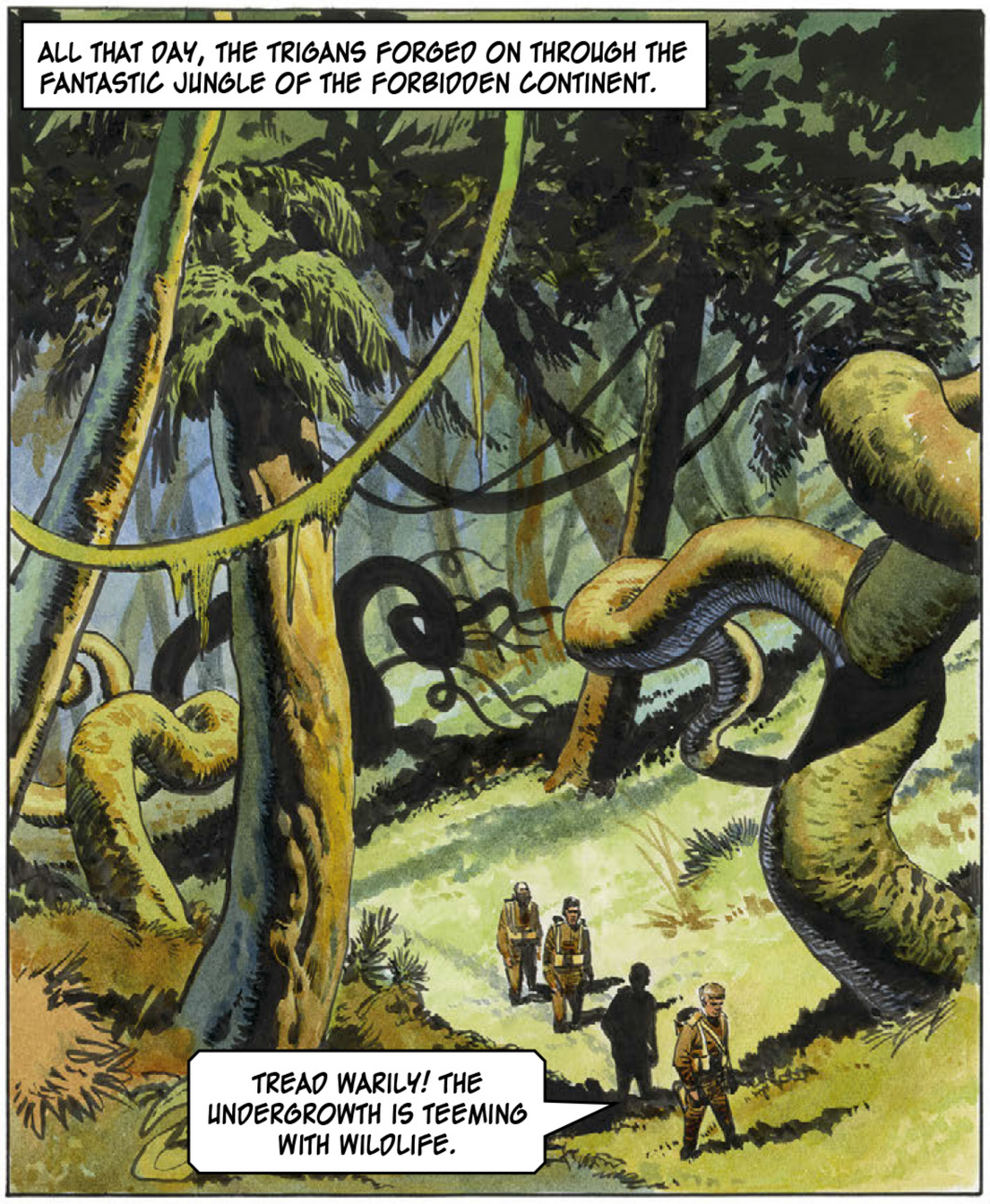

IT HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT THE EMPEROR AND THREE MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF WERE DEPARTING FOR A VISIT TO THE KINGDOM OF HERICON. A SMALL CROWD GATHERED TO SEE THE IMPERIAL CRAFT TAKE OFF.
TO THE LOST CITY OF DORANA!

DAYS LATER, THE FOUR EXPLORERS SAW THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT RISING OUT OF THE SEA AHEAD. A STAB OF FEAR STRUCK AT CAPTAIN ZENO'S HEART...
TO ALL THE DANGERS I HAVE ADDED ONE OTHER...


WITH JUST ENOUGH FUEL LEFT TO ENSURE THEIR RETURN TO TRIGAN CITY, THEY LANDED... AND SET OFF ON FOOT THROUGH THE DENSE JUNGLE.

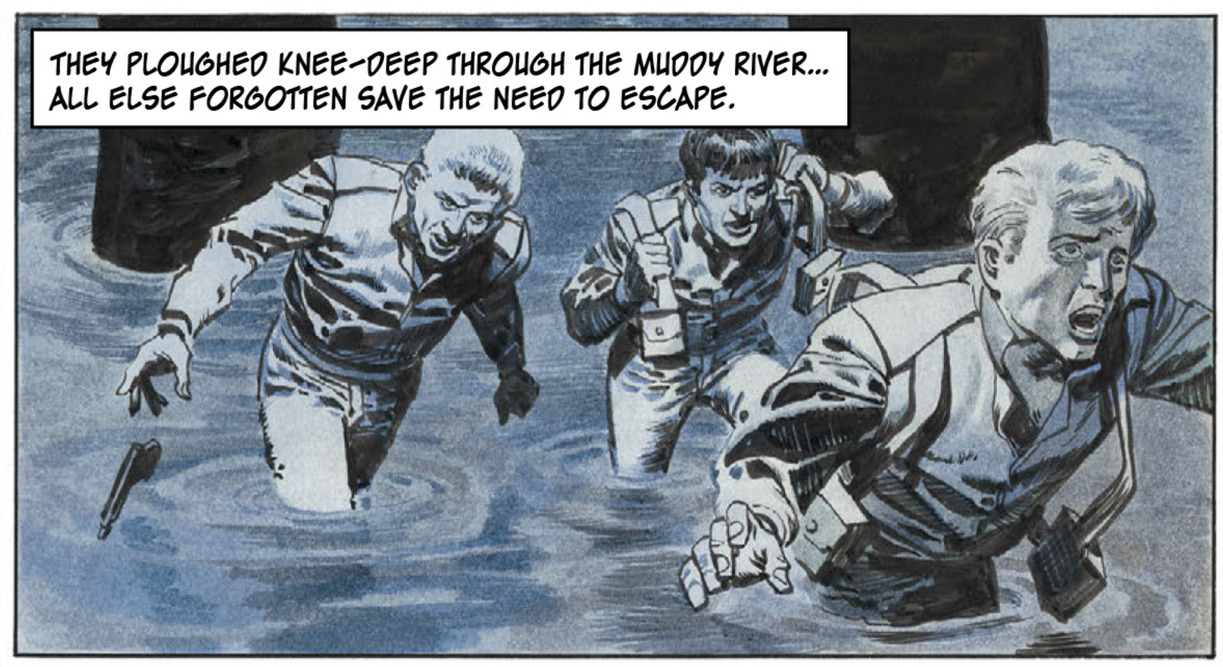

SOME HOURS LATER, THEIR CRAFT WAS SIGHTED BY A PATROLLING CRUISER OF THE CATON AIR FLEET. IT LANDED...

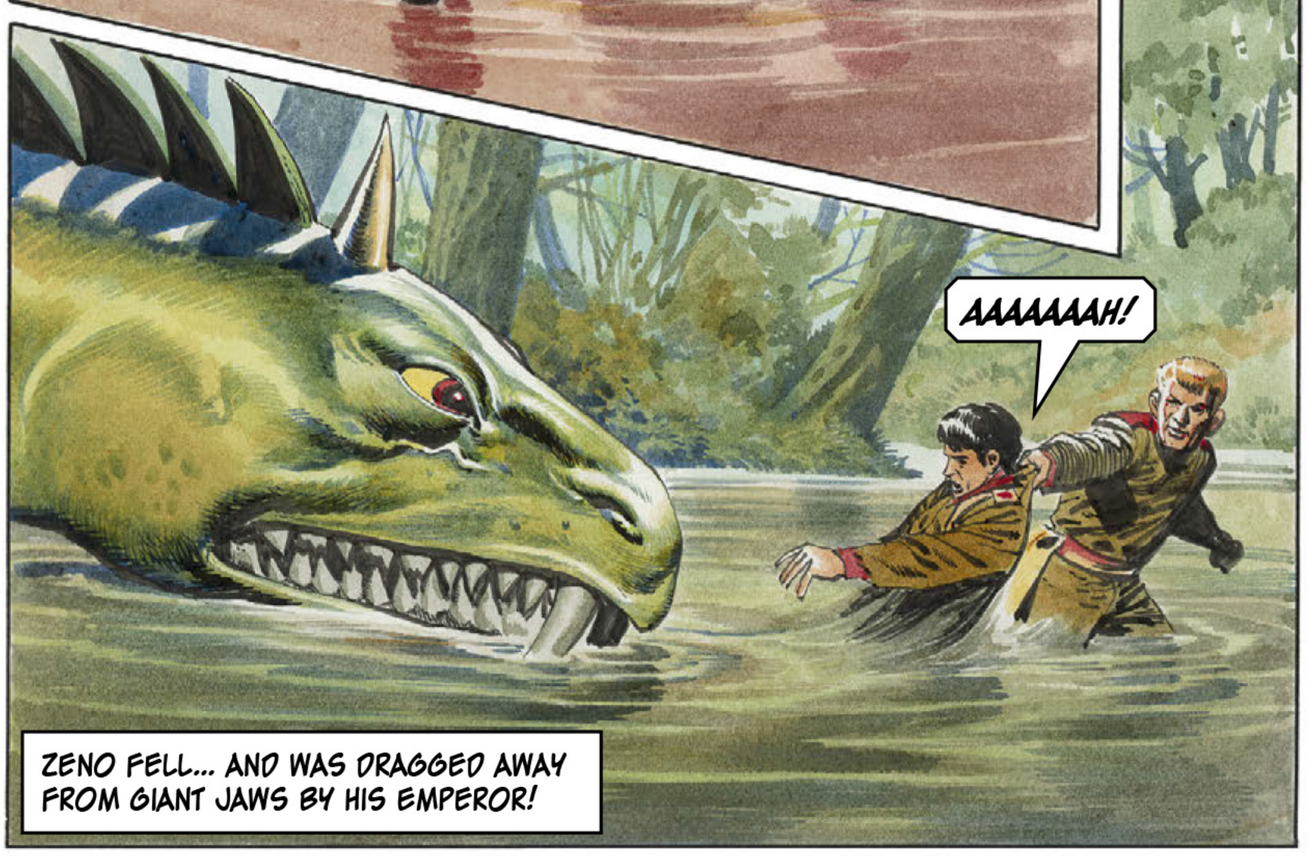
A PALL OF SMOKE ROSE FROM THE IMPERIAL CRAFT... AS A COHORT OF CATON GUARDS SET OFF IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE TRIGANS!


ALL THAT DAY, THE TRIGANS FORGED ON THROUGH THE FANTASTIC JUNGLE OF THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT.
TREAD WARILY! THE UNDERGROWTH IS TEEMING WITH WILDLIFE.

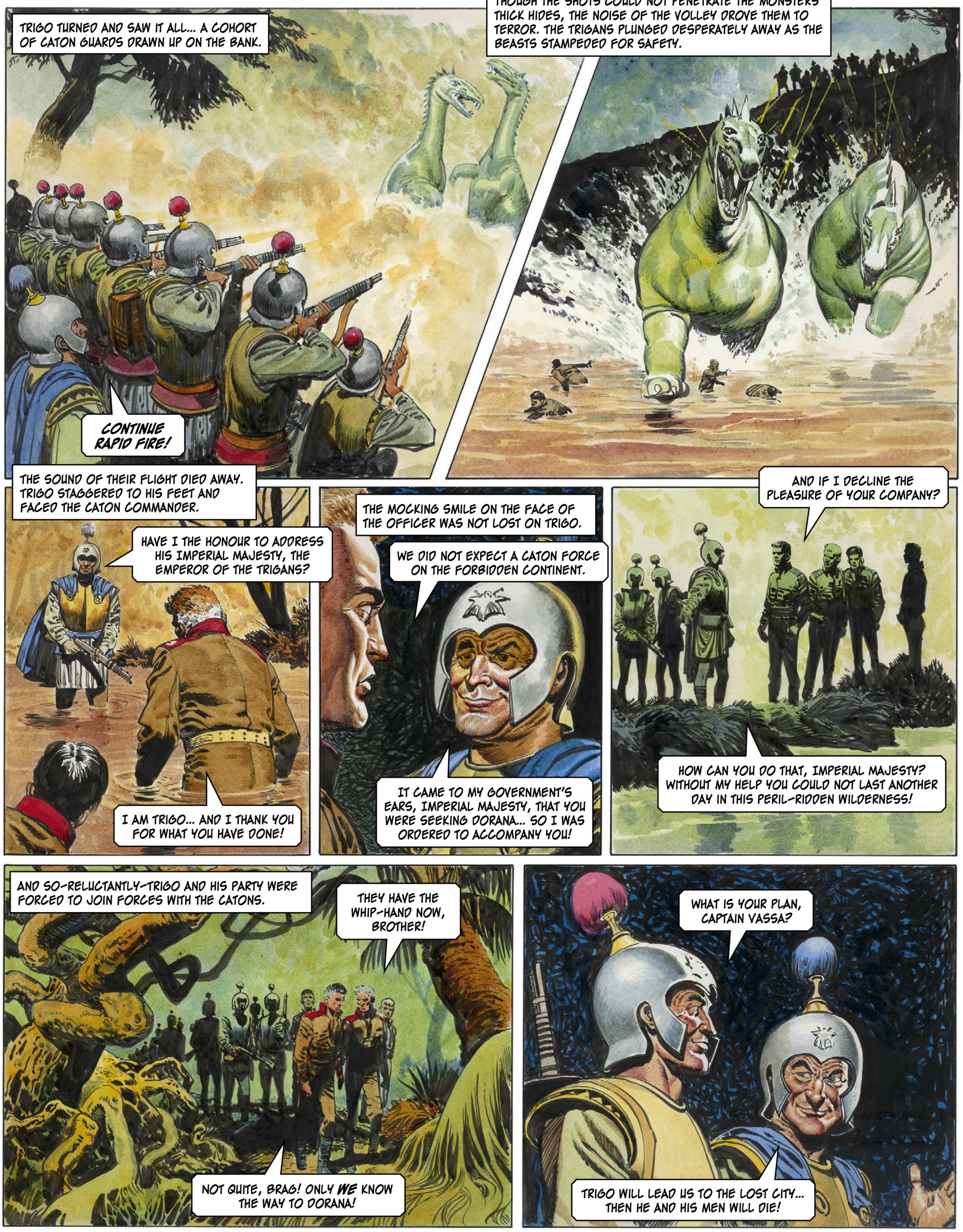
AND THEN...
THE EMPEROR LOOSED OFF A SHOT AT THE NIGHTMARE CREATURE THAT LUMBERED TOWARDS THEM...
TRIGO! LOOK!
BY THE STARS!
SCATTER FOR YOUR LIVES!

THE GREAT BEAST WAS NOT ALONE!
THAT WAY... QUICKLY!

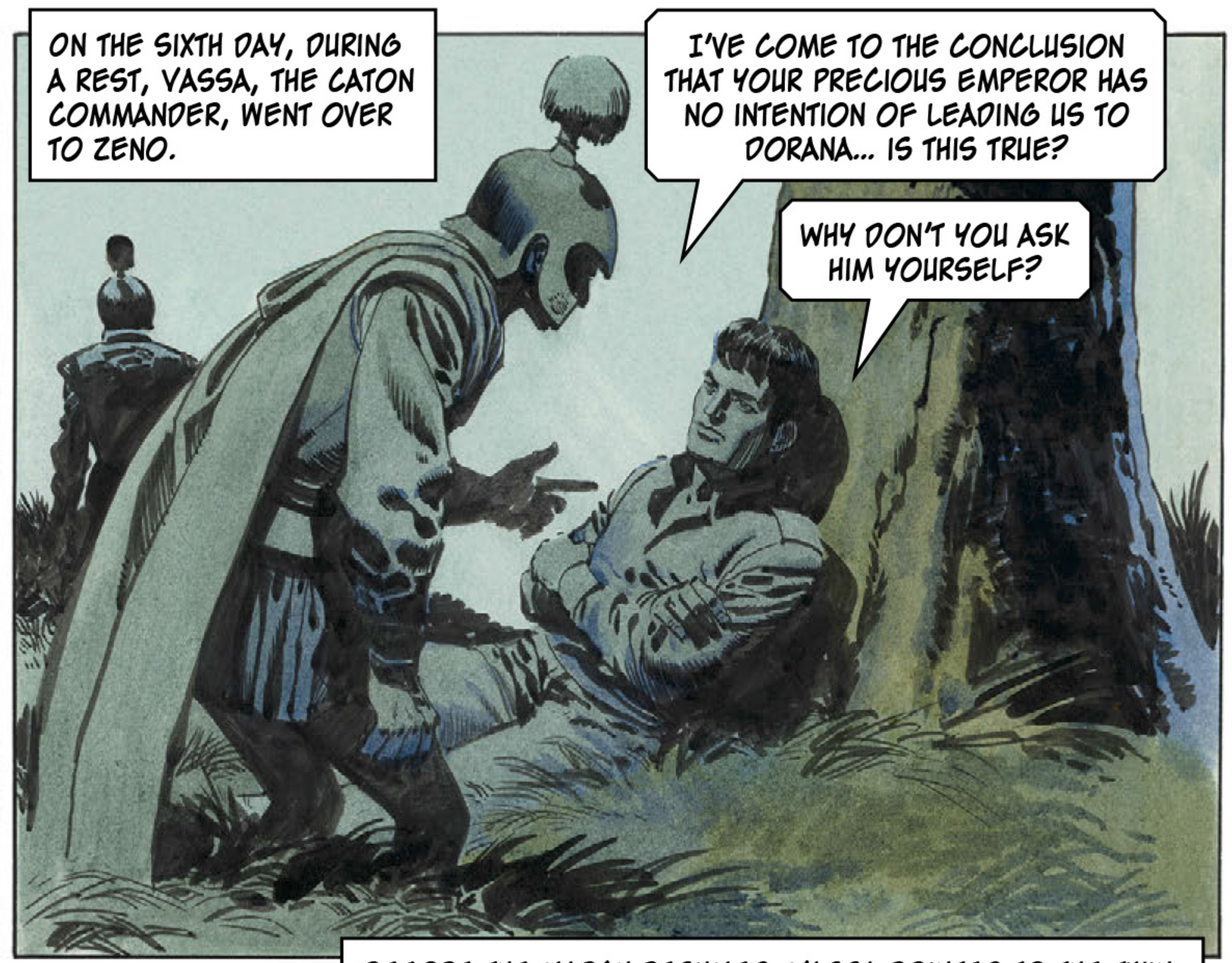

THEY PLOUGHED KNEE-DEEP THROUGH THE MUDDY RIVER... ALL ELSE FORGOTTEN SAVE THE NEED TO ESCAPE.


AAAAAAAH!
ZENO FELL... AND WAS DRAGGED AWAY FROM GIANT JAWS BY HIS EMPEROR!

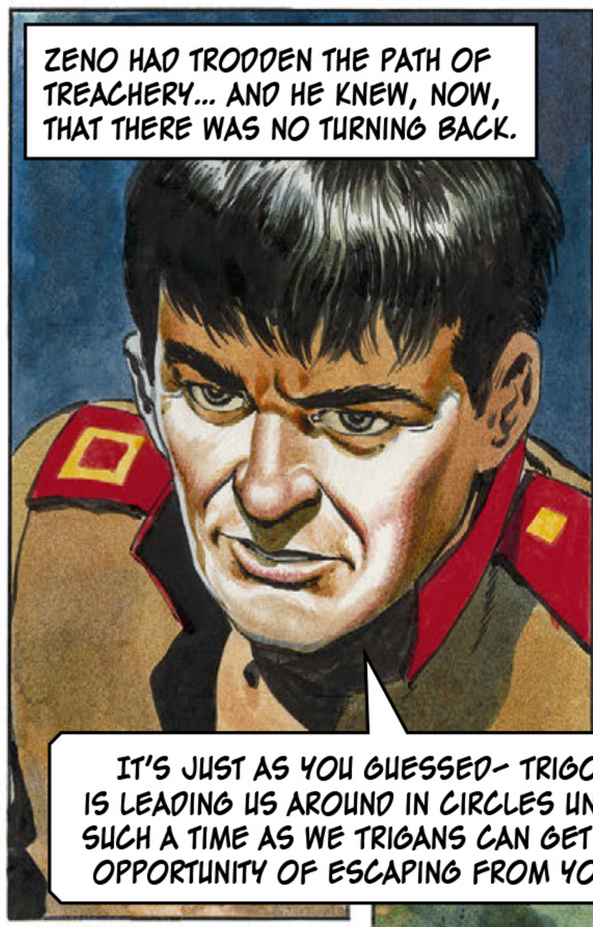
AND THEN- A CRASHING FUSILLADE OF SHOTS!

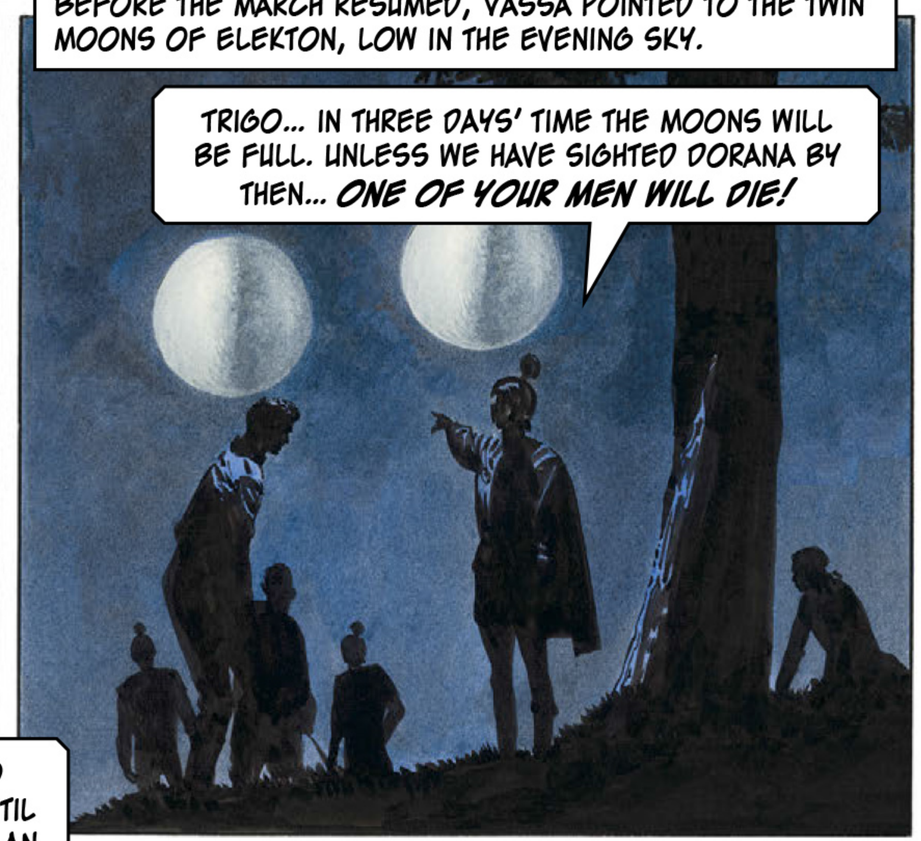

TRIGO TURNED AND SAW IT ALL... A COHORT OF CATON GUARDS DRAWN UP ON THE BANK.
CONTINUE RAPID FIRE!
THOUGH THE SHOTS COULD NOT PENETRATE THE MONSTERS' THICK HIDES, THE NOISE OF THE VOLLEY DROVE THEM TO TERROR. THE TRIGANS PLUNGED DESPERATELY AWAY AS THE BEASTS STAMPEDED FOR SAFETY.
THE SOUND OF THEIR FLIGHT DIED AWAY. TRIGO STAGGERED TO HIS FEET AND FACED THE CATON COMMANDER.
HAVE I THE HONOUR TO ADDRESS HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS?
I AM TRIGO... AND I THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE!
THE MOCKING SMILE ON THE FACE OF THE OFFICER WAS NOT LOST ON TRIGO.
WE DID NOT EXPECT A CATON FORCE ON THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT.
IT CAME TO MY GOVERNMENT'S EARS, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THAT YOU WERE SEEKING DORANA... SO I WAS ORDERED TO ACCOMPANY YOU!
AND IF I DECLINE THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY?
HOW CAN YOU DO THAT, IMPERIAL MAJESTY? WITHOUT MY HELP YOU COULD NOT LAST ANOTHER DAY IN THIS PERIL-RIDDEN WILDERNESS!
AND SO-RELUCTANTLY-TRIGO AND HIS PARTY WERE FORCED TO JOIN FORCES WITH THE CATONS.
THEY HAVE THE WHIP-HAND NOW, BROTHER!
NOT QUITE, BRAG! ONLY WE KNOW THE WAY TO DORANA!
WHAT IS YOUR PLAN, CAPTAIN VASSA?
TRIGO WILL LEAD US TO THE LOST CITY... THEN HE AND HIS MEN WILL DIE!

TRIGO HAD COMMITTED THE ROUTE TO MEMORY. HE LED THE WAY. FOR SIX PERIL-RIDDEN DAYS THEY FORGED THROUGH THE NIGHTMARE JUNGLE OF THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT.


ON THE SIXTH DAY, DURING A REST, VASSA, THE CATON COMMANDER, WENT OVER TO ZENO.
I'VE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT YOUR PRECIOUS EMPEROR HAS NO INTENTION OF LEADING US TO DORANA... IS THIS TRUE?
WHY DON'T YOU ASK HIM YOURSELF?

SPARE ME YOUR INSOLENCE, ZENO! I'VE YET TO INFORM TRIGO THAT IT WAS YOU WHO SOLD MY GOVERNMENT THE SECRET OF THE EXPEDITION... WHEN I DO, I'VE NO DOUBT HE'LL SLAY YOU WITH HIS OWN BARE HANDS!
NO! DON'T BETRAY ME TO THE EMPEROR! ANYTHING BUT THAT!


ZENO HAD TRODDEN THE PATH OF TREACHERY... AND HE KNEW, NOW, THAT THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK.
IT'S JUST AS YOU GUESSED- TRIGO IS LEADING US AROUND IN CIRCLES UNTIL SUCH A TIME AS WE TRIGANS CAN GET AN OPPORTUNITY OF ESCAPING FROM YOU!


BEFORE THE MARCH RESUMED, VASSA POINTED TO THE TWIN MOONS OF ELEKTON, LOW IN THE EVENING SKY.
TRIGO... IN THREE DAYS' TIME THE MOONS WILL BE FULL. UNLESS WE HAVE SIGHTED DORANA BY THEN... ONE OF YOUR MEN WILL DIE!

TRIGO KNEW THAT HE WAS BEATEN! THEY SET OFF AGAIN...
SO NOW WE HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE LOST CITY... CAN WE REACH THERE BEFORE THE MOONS ARE FULL?
AND FOR EVERY WAXING AND WANING OF THE MOONS BEFORE WE REACH THE LOST CITY, ANOTHER TRIGAN WILL DIE! I TRUST THAT THAT WILL ENCOURAGE YOU NOT TO LINGER, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
PERHAPS... WITH LUCK!

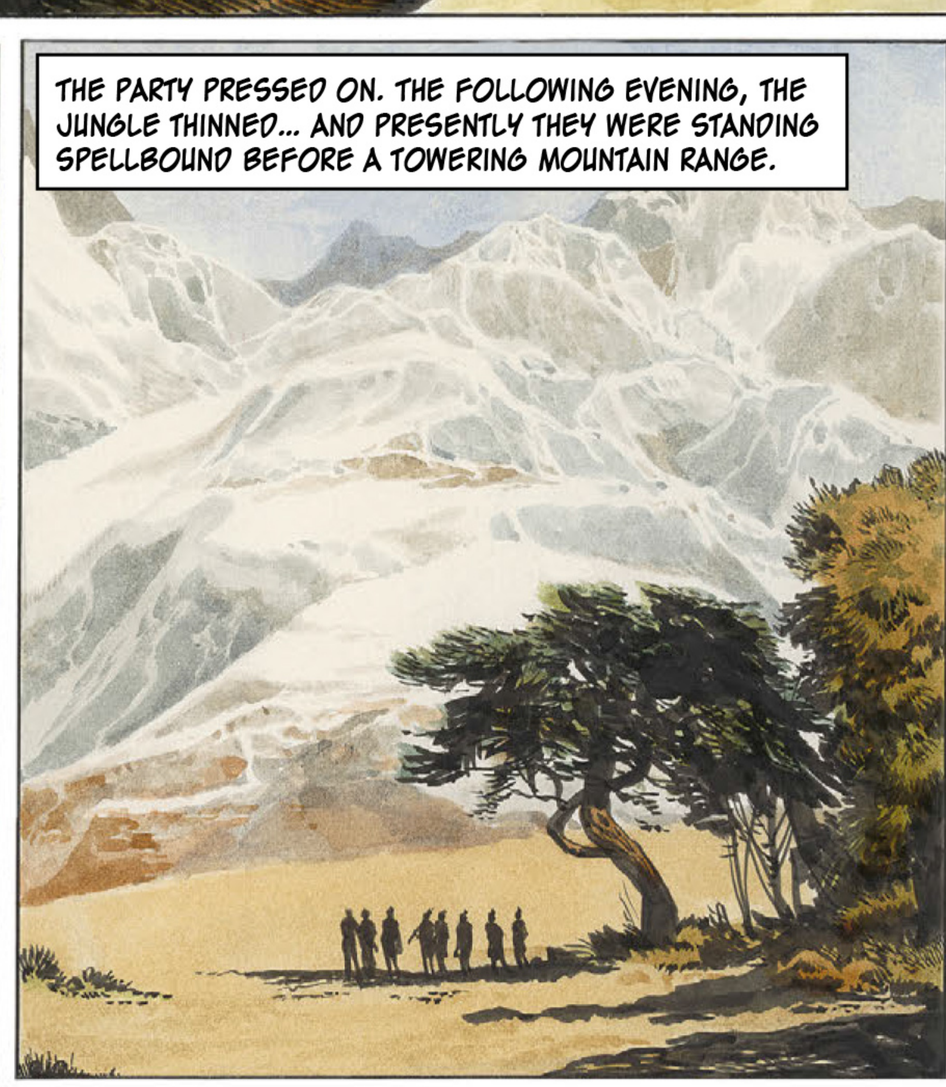
IT WAS ON THE FOLLOWING MORNING THAT A DISASTROUS INCIDENT OCCURRED. THE PARTY WAS CROSSING A NATURAL BRIDGE OVER A DIZZY GORGE...

SUDDENLY...
AAAAAAAAH! LOOK!

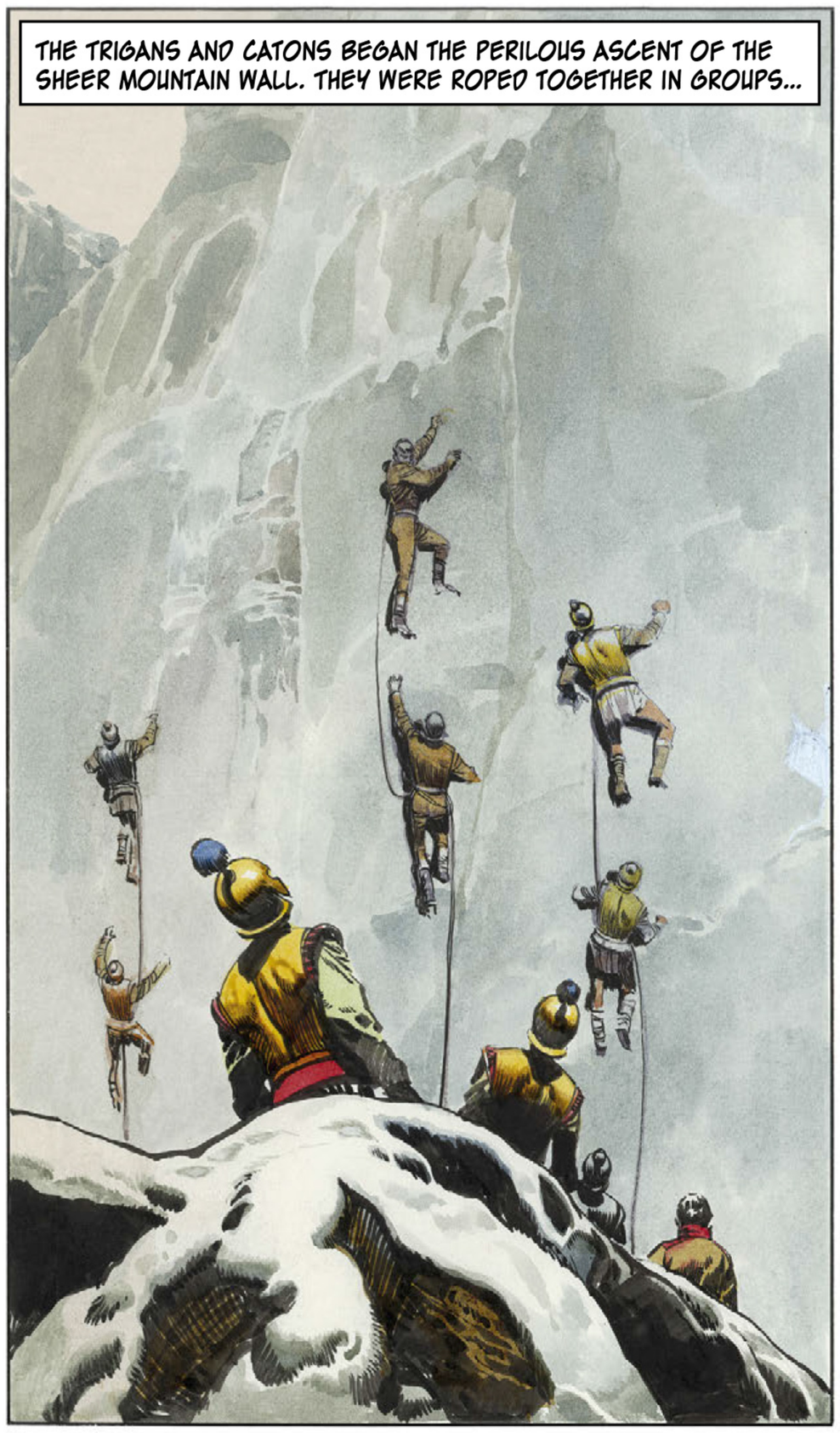
SCARLET WINGS FLASHED IN THE SUNLIGHT AS A CLOUD OF FLYING MONSTERS DIVED TO THE ATTACK.

HALF OF THE CATON GUARDS FLED BACK THE WAY THEY HAD COME... AND IT WAS THEY WHO SUFFERED!

IT WAS SOON OVER. FROM THE SHELTER OF THE TREES, TRIGO AND THE REST SAW THE WINGED TERRORS FLY AWAY.
HALF OF MY MEN WIPED OUT! BUT WE STILL OUTNUMBER YOU BY MORE THAN TWO TO ONE, TRIGO!

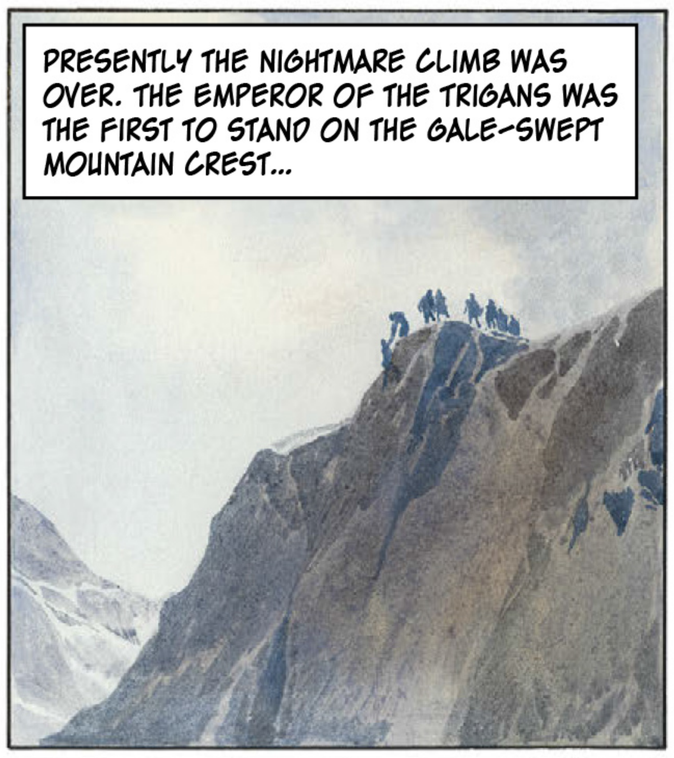

THE PARTY PRESSED ON. THE FOLLOWING EVENING, THE JUNGLE THINNED... AND PRESENTLY THEY WERE STANDING SPELLBOUND BEFORE A TOWERING MOUNTAIN RANGE.

WHEN WE STAND ON THAT HIGHEST CREST, WE SHALL LOOK DOWN INTO A SECRET VALLEY... AND SEE THE LOST CITY OF DORANA!

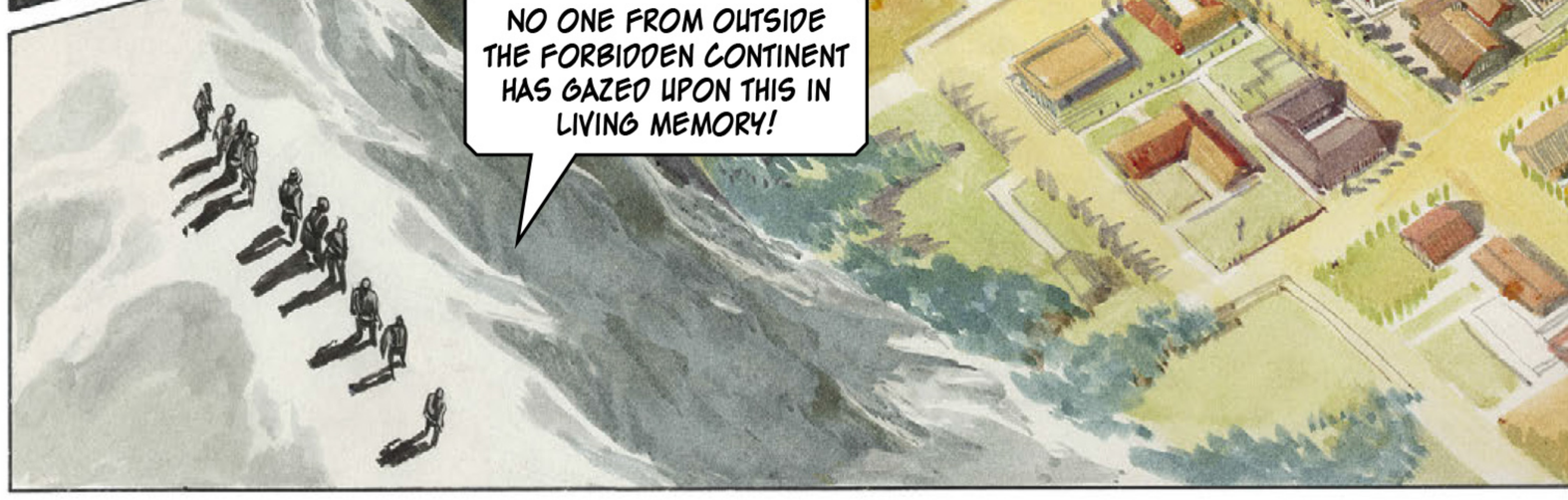

THE TRIGANS AND CATONS BEGAN THE PERILOUS ASCENT OF THE SHEER MOUNTAIN WALL. THEY WERE ROPED TOGETHER IN GROUPS...

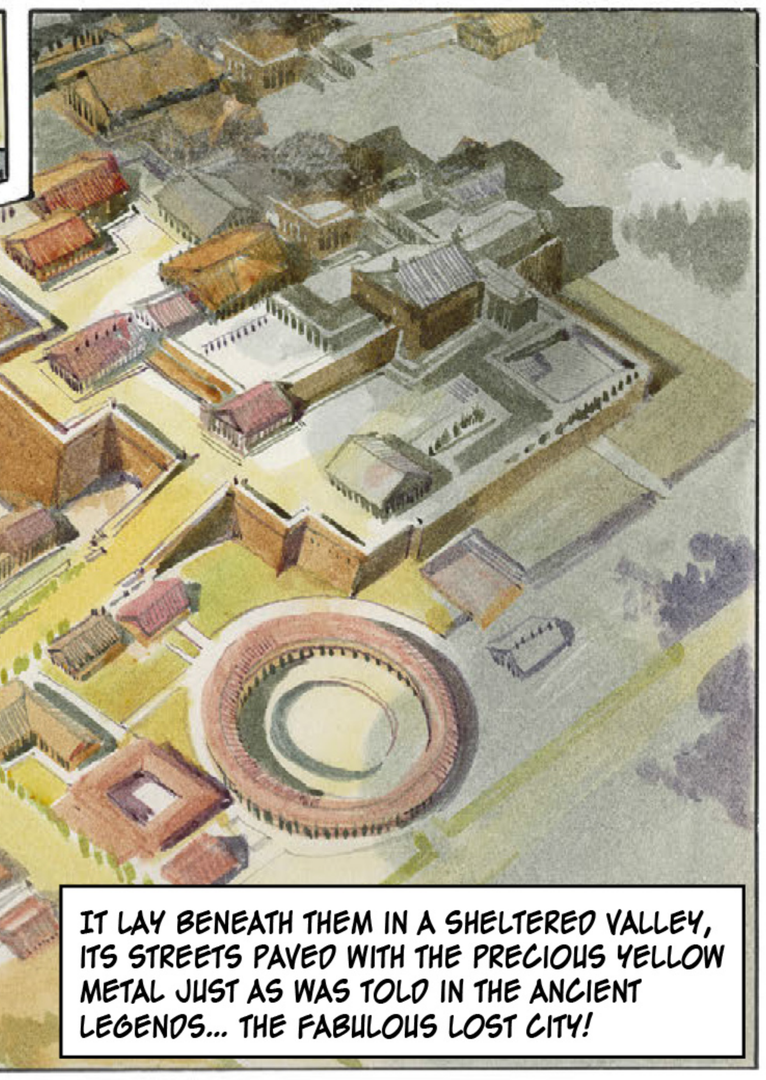
AFTER AN OVERNIGHT REST ON A HIGH WINDSWEPT LEDGE, THEY SET OFF AGAIN. HALF WAY TO THE SUMMIT, DISASTER STRUCK... ONE OF THE CATON GROUPS FELL TO DESTRUCTION!
AAAAAAAAGH!

CLINGING LIKE INSECTS TO THE ICE-SHEATHED ROCK, TRIGO AND HIS BROTHER BRAG EXCHANGED GLANCES OF GRIM SATISFACTION.
THE ODDS ARE LESSENING... NOW IT'S SIX TO FOUR!
YES! BUT THEY ARE ARMED!


PRESENTLY THE NIGHTMARE CLIMB WAS OVER. THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS WAS THE FIRST TO STAND ON THE GALE-SWEPT MOUNTAIN CREST...

THE OTHERS JOINED HIM... AND THEN...
DORANA!


NO ONE FROM OUTSIDE THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT HAS GAZED UPON THIS IN LIVING MEMORY!


IT LAY BENEATH THEM IN A SHELTERED VALLEY, ITS STREETS PAVED WITH THE PRECIOUS YELLOW METAL JUST AS WAS TOLD IN THE ANCIENT LEGENDS... THE FABULOUS LOST CITY!

CAPTAIN VASSA SMILED IN TRIUMPH.
MY THANKS FOR LEADING US HERE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY! THIS DAY I SHALL RAISE THE FLAG OF CATO OVER THE CITY, AS A SYMBOL THAT ITS VAST RICHES HAVE BEEN TAKEN OVER BY THE CATON STATE!
AND NOW, IMPERIAL MAJESTY... YOUR REWARD!

TRIGO THREW HIMSELF FORWARD... AND THE DEADLY PROJECTILE BURNT THE AIR ABOVE HIS HEAD!

AS VASSA FELL HEAVILY, TRIGO ROLLED CLEAR... AND HURLED HIMSELF INTO THE ABYSS!
FOLLOW ME, TRIGANS!
STOP THEM! SHOOT THEM DOWN!

NEXT INSTANT, THE FOUR TRIGANS WERE SLITHERING OUT OF CONTROL DOWN THE STEEP SNOW SLOPE.

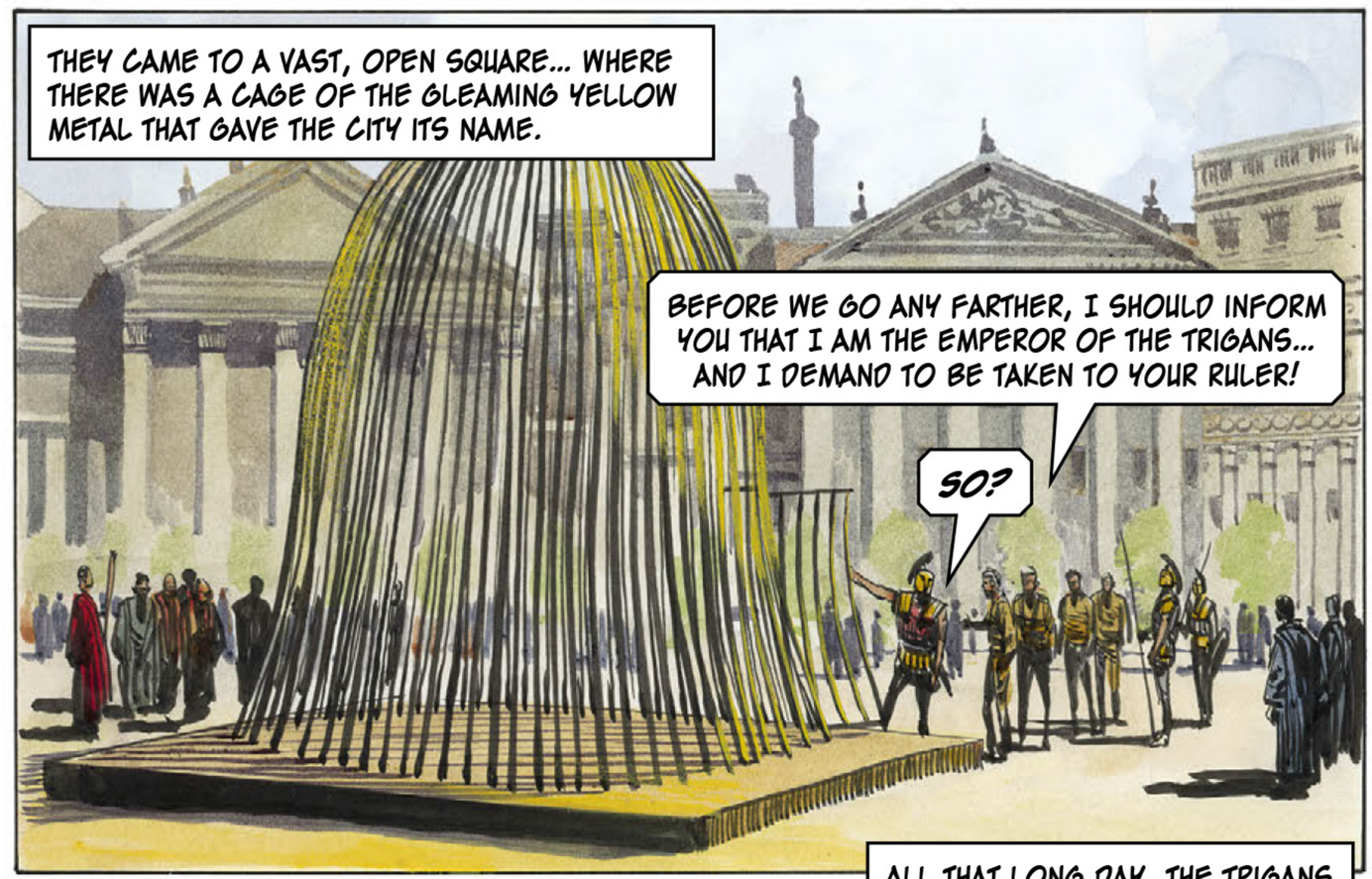
LATER –MUCH LATER –TRIGO RAISED HIS THROBBING HEAD. HE LAY IN SOFT SNOW, WITH HIS COMPANIONS SPRAWLED ALL ROUND HIM.
WHAT NOW, UNCLE?
WE CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY INTO THE CITY!

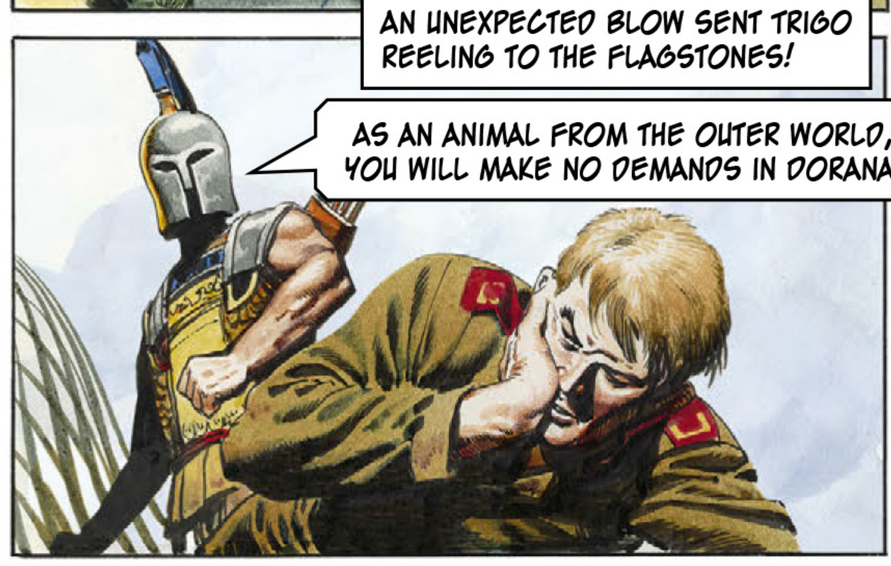
BRAG HAD INJURED HIS LEG, AND THE OTHERS HAD TO CARRY HIM THE REST OF THE WAY. SOON THEY WERE PASSING DOWN AN AVENUE OF TOWERING COLUMNS THAT LED INTO THE CITY.
NOT A SIGN OF ANYONE! IS THE CITY DESERTED THEN?
I DOUBT IT! DON'T YOU HAVE THE FEELING WE ARE BEING WATCHED?

AND THEN...
STILL–OR WE ARE DEAD MEN!

THE LEADER OF THE MASKED GUARDS POINTED AND SNARLED A HARSH ORDER.
MARCH!

SOON THE TRIGANS WERE TREADING THE STREETS OF THE LOST CITY... AND THE PEOPLE FLOCKED TO STARE AT THEM IN AWE.
LOOK! LOOK! ANIMALS FROM THE OUTER WORLD! SUCH CREATURES SHOULD BE DESTROYED ON SIGHT!


THEY CAME TO A VAST, OPEN SQUARE... WHERE THERE WAS A CAGE OF THE GLEAMING YELLOW METAL THAT GAVE THE CITY ITS NAME.
BEFORE WE GO ANY FARTHER, I SHOULD INFORM YOU THAT I AM THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS... AND I DEMAND TO BE TAKEN TO YOUR RULER!
SO?


AN UNEXPECTED BLOW SENT TRIGO REELING TO THE FLAGSTONES!
AS AN ANIMAL FROM THE OUTER WORLD, YOU WILL MAKE NO DEMANDS IN DORANA!

THEY WERE THRUST INTO THE CAGE. THE PEOPLE PRESSED FORWARD TO JEER AT THEM AND THE GUARDS MADE NO ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE WHEN LAUGHING URCHINS THREW STONES AT THE DEFENCELESS PRISONERS.
THEY CAME TO STEAL OUR PRECIOUS METAL!
DEATH TO THE ANIMALS FROM THE OUTER WORLD!

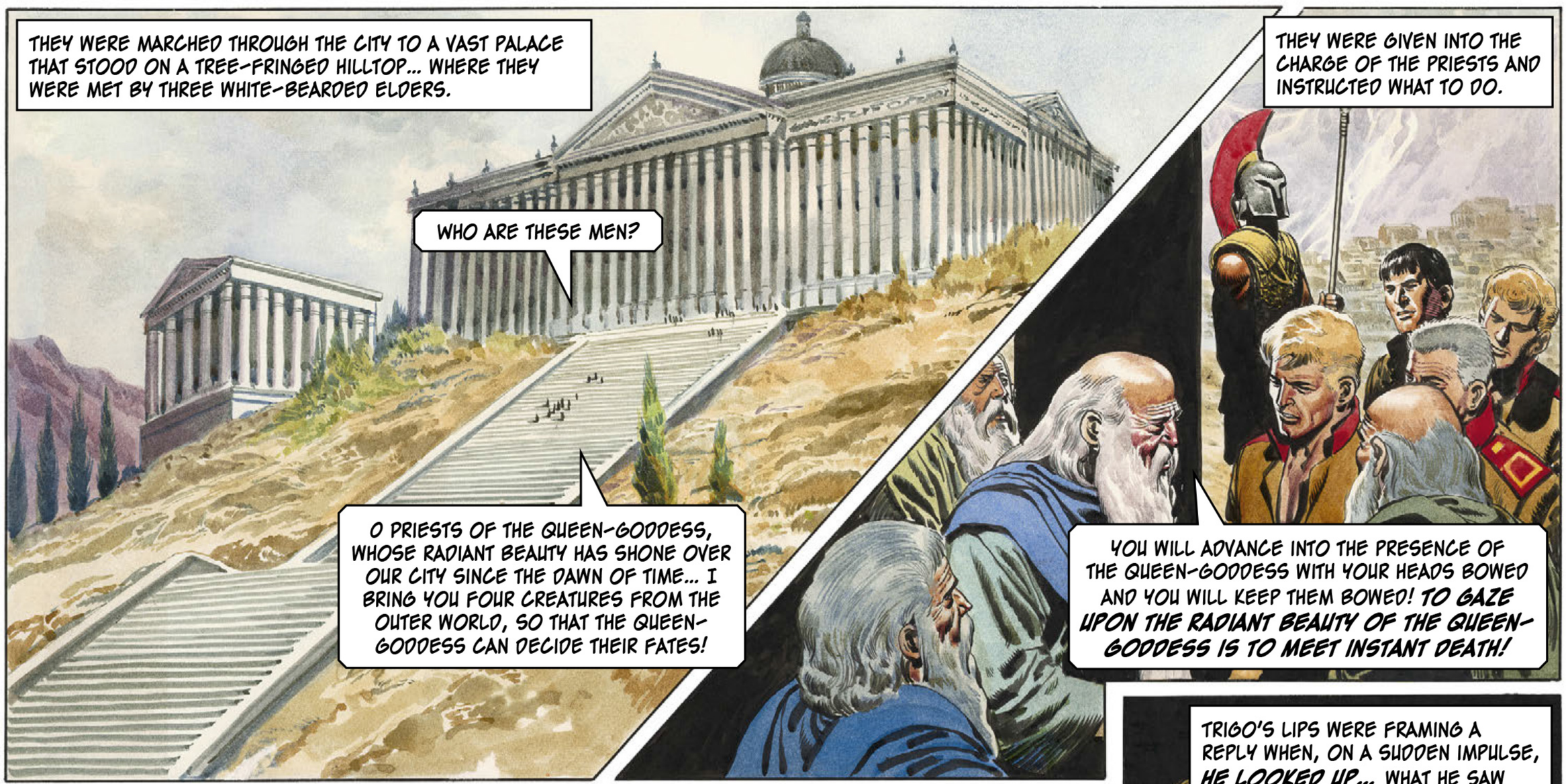
ALL THAT LONG DAY, THE TRIGANS SUFFERED IN THE SEARING SUN WITHOUT FOOD OR DRINK.
THEY DON'T REGARD US AS MEN, BUT BEASTS!
ARE THEY GOING TO KEEP US IN HERE TILL WE ROT?

TOWARDS EVENING, A YOUNG GIRL CAME SHYLY FORWARD.
CAN- CAN I GIVE THEM FRUIT? THE POOR CREATURES LOOK SO WRETCHED.
AS YOU WISH, CHILD... IF YOU'RE FOOL ENOUGH TO WASTE YOUR SYMPATHY ON THEM.

THIRSTILY, THE TRIGANS DEVOURED THE SUCCULENT FRUIT AND QUESTIONED THEIR NEW FRIEND, WHO SAID HER NAME WAS NARINA.
YOU ARE KIND, NARINA... CAN YOU TELL US WHAT'S TO HAPPEN TO US?
IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY...

AS PEOPLE FROM THE OUTER WORLD, YOUR FATE DEPENDS ON THE WILL OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS... IF SHE WISHES YOU TO LIVE YOU WILL LIVE... IF SHE SAYS DIE, THEN YOU WILL DIE!

AND THEN...
OUT, ANIMALS! YOU ARE TO BE TAKEN INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS!


THEY WERE MARCHED THROUGH THE CITY TO A VAST PALACE THAT STOOD ON A TREE-FRINGED HILLTOP... WHERE THEY WERE MET BY THREE WHITE-BEARDED ELDERS.
WHO ARE THESE MEN?
O PRIESTS OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS, WHOSE RADIANT BEAUTY HAS SHONE OVER OUR CITY SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME... I BRING YOU FOUR CREATURES FROM THE OUTER WORLD, SO THAT THE QUEEN-GODDESS CAN DECIDE THEIR FATES!
THEY WERE GIVEN INTO THE CHARGE OF THE PRIESTS AND INSTRUCTED WHAT TO DO.
YOU WILL ADVANCE INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS WITH YOUR HEADS BOWED AND YOU WILL KEEP THEM BOWED! TO GAZE UPON THE RADIANT BEAUTY OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS IS TO MEET INSTANT DEATH!

THEY ADVANCED SLOWLY ACROSS A VAST HALL... AND A CLEAR, THRILLING VOICE GREETED THEM.
LET HIM WHO IS YOUR LEADER SPEAK! WHO ARE YOU?

TRIGO'S LIPS WERE FRAMING A REPLY WHEN, ON A SUDDEN IMPULSE, HE LOOKED UP... WHAT HE SAW MADE HIS HEART MISS A BEAT.
AAAAAA! BY ALL THE STARS!

THE PRIESTS' VOICES ROSE IN HORROR...
AAAAAAH! HE HAS SEEN THE FACE OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS!
SACRILEGE!
SUMMON THE GUARDS! HE MUST DIE INSTANTLY!

TRIGO WAS STILL STARING IN AWE AS THE FIGURE ON THE THRONE SANK SILENTLY FROM SIGHT.

IN ANSWER TO THE PRIESTS' CRIES, GUARDS CAME RUNNING... AND TRIGO TURNED TO MEET HIS FATE.
STRIKE HIM DOWN!

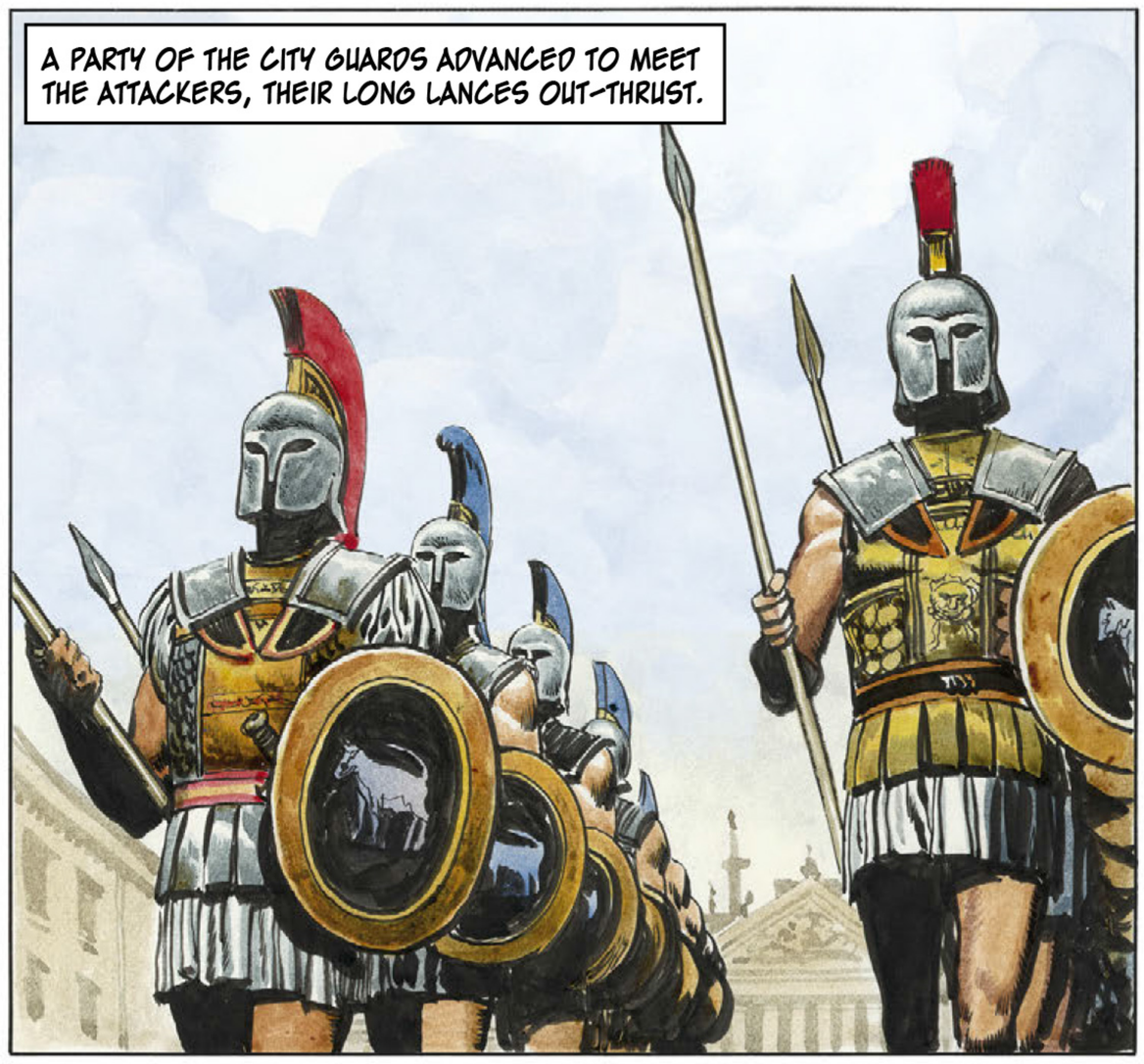
AND THEN... IT HAPPENED! A RENDING EXPLOSION!
AAAAAAH!

HALF-BLINDED BY THE CHOKING FUMES, THE TRIGANS REELED TOWARDS THE GASH IN THE WALL.
FOLLOW ME! THIS IS OUR WAY OF ESCAPE!

THEY STAGGERED OUT INTO THE SUNLIGHT. MORE THUDDING EXPLOSIONS WERE ECHOING OVER THE CITY BELOW THEM.
IT'S AN ATTACK! BUT... WHO?
THE CATONS... WHO ELSE?

THERE THEY ARE!

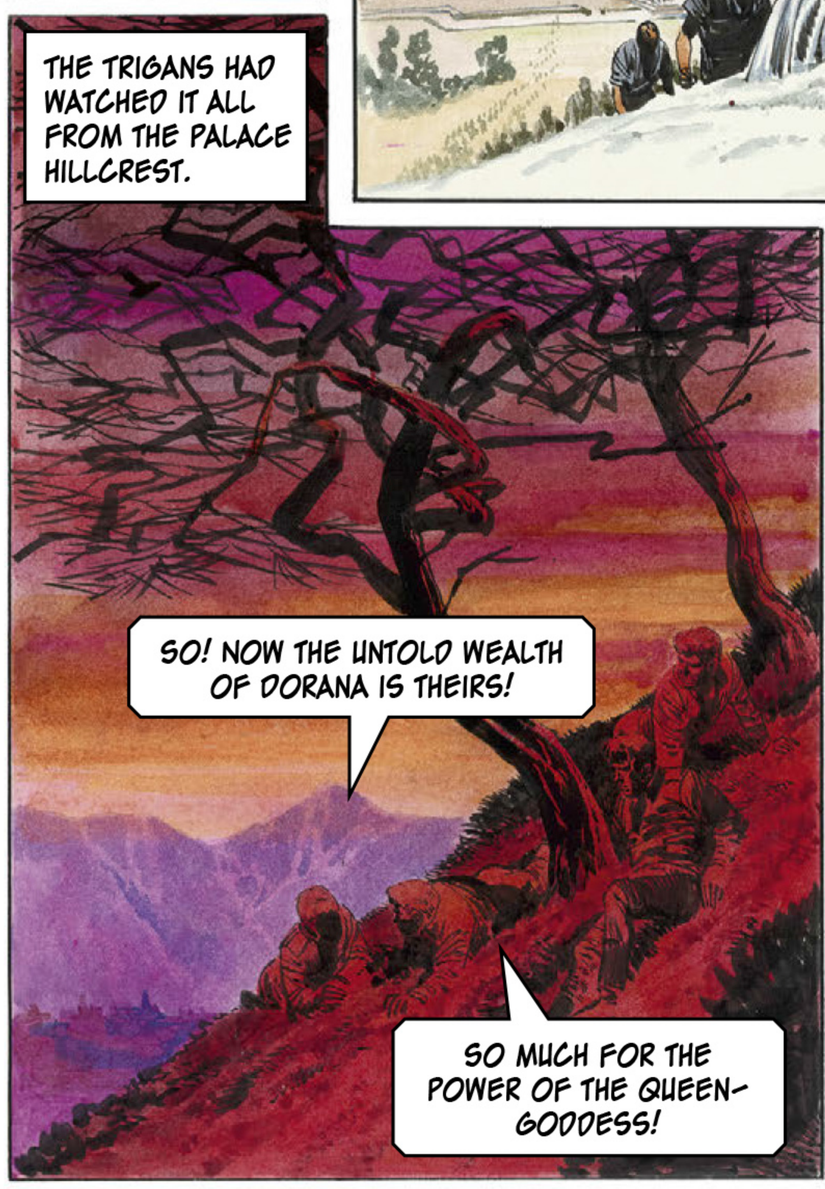
ADVANCING DOWN ONE OF THE BROAD STREETS OF THE CITY WERE THE CATONS WHOM THE TRIGANS HAD LAST SEEN ON THE MOUNTAIN CREST. THEY WERE FIRING BOMBS FROM THEIR HAND-GUNS.
KEEP UP THE BOMBARDMENT TILL THE STREETS ARE CLEAR!

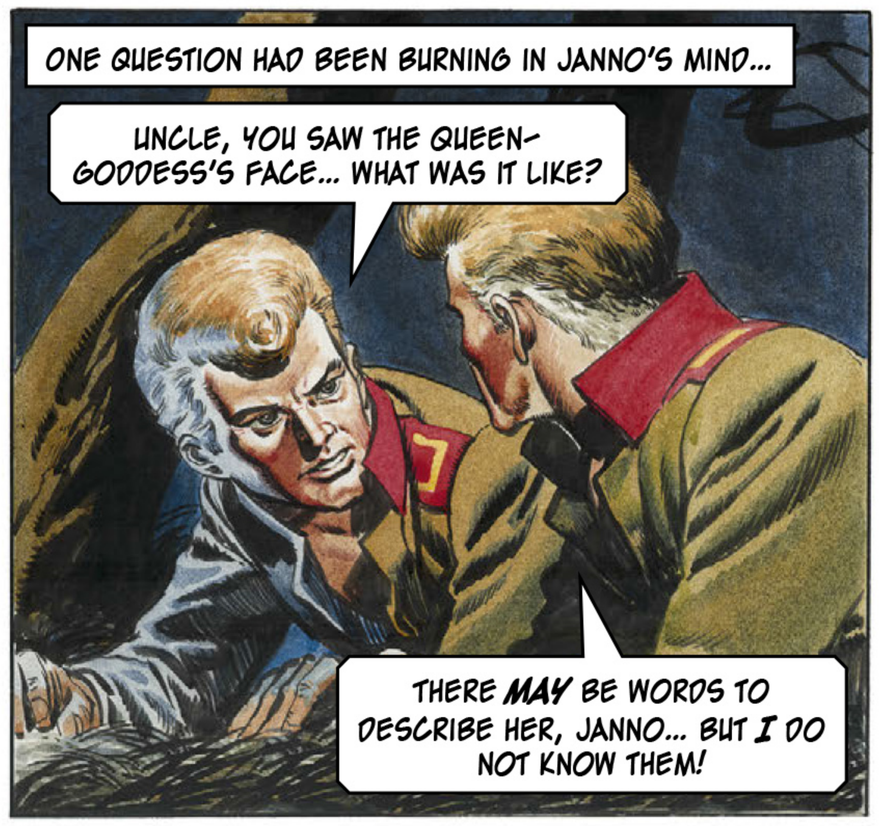

A PARTY OF THE CITY GUARDS ADVANCED TO MEET THE ATTACKERS, THEIR LONG LANCES OUT-THRUST.

BUT THEIR TRAGIC, HOPELESS GALLANTRY WAS BROUGHT TO NOTHING IN A WITHERING HAIL OF GUNFIRE.

THE SUDDENNESS AND FURY OF THE ATTACK SPARKED OFF A WAVE OF BLIND PANIC IN THE CITY. THE PEOPLE FLED FOR THE SAFETY OF THE SNOW SLOPES BEYOND.
AAAAAH! WE ARE DOOMED. IT IS THE END OF THE WORLD!

NIGHT WAS BEGINNING TO FALL AS THE HANDFUL OF CATONS RAISED THEIR COUNTRY'S FLAG OVER THE LOST CITY.


THE TRIGANS HAD WATCHED IT ALL FROM THE PALACE HILLCREST.
SO! NOW THE UNTOLD WEALTH OF DORANA IS THEIRS!
SO MUCH FOR THE POWER OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS!


ONE QUESTION HAD BEEN BURNING IN JANNO'S MIND...
UNCLE, YOU SAW THE QUEEN-GODDESS'S FACE... WHAT WAS IT LIKE?
THERE MAY BE WORDS TO DESCRIBE HER, JANNO... BUT I DO NOT KNOW THEM!

THAT NIGHT, THE CATONS FOUND FOOD AND FEASTED IN THE GREAT HALL OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS'S PALACE.
COMRADES! I GIVE YOU A TOAST... TO THE NEW CATON EMPIRE WHICH WE HAVE FOUNDED THIS DAY!

OUTSIDE, TRIGO AND HIS UNARMED COMPANIONS WATCHED AND WAITED.
THE CURS ARE MAKING MERRY AFTER THEIR EASY CONQUEST!
SOON THEY'LL SLEEP AND THEN WE CAN STRIKE! LISTEN... HERE'S MY PLAN...

THE TWIN MOONS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON WERE DIPPING TOWARDS THE MOUNTAIN CRESTS AND DAY WAS APPROACHING BEFORE THE CATONS FELL ASLEEP OVER THE REMAINS OF THEIR FEAST, LEAVING ONE OF THEIR NUMBER ON GUARD.

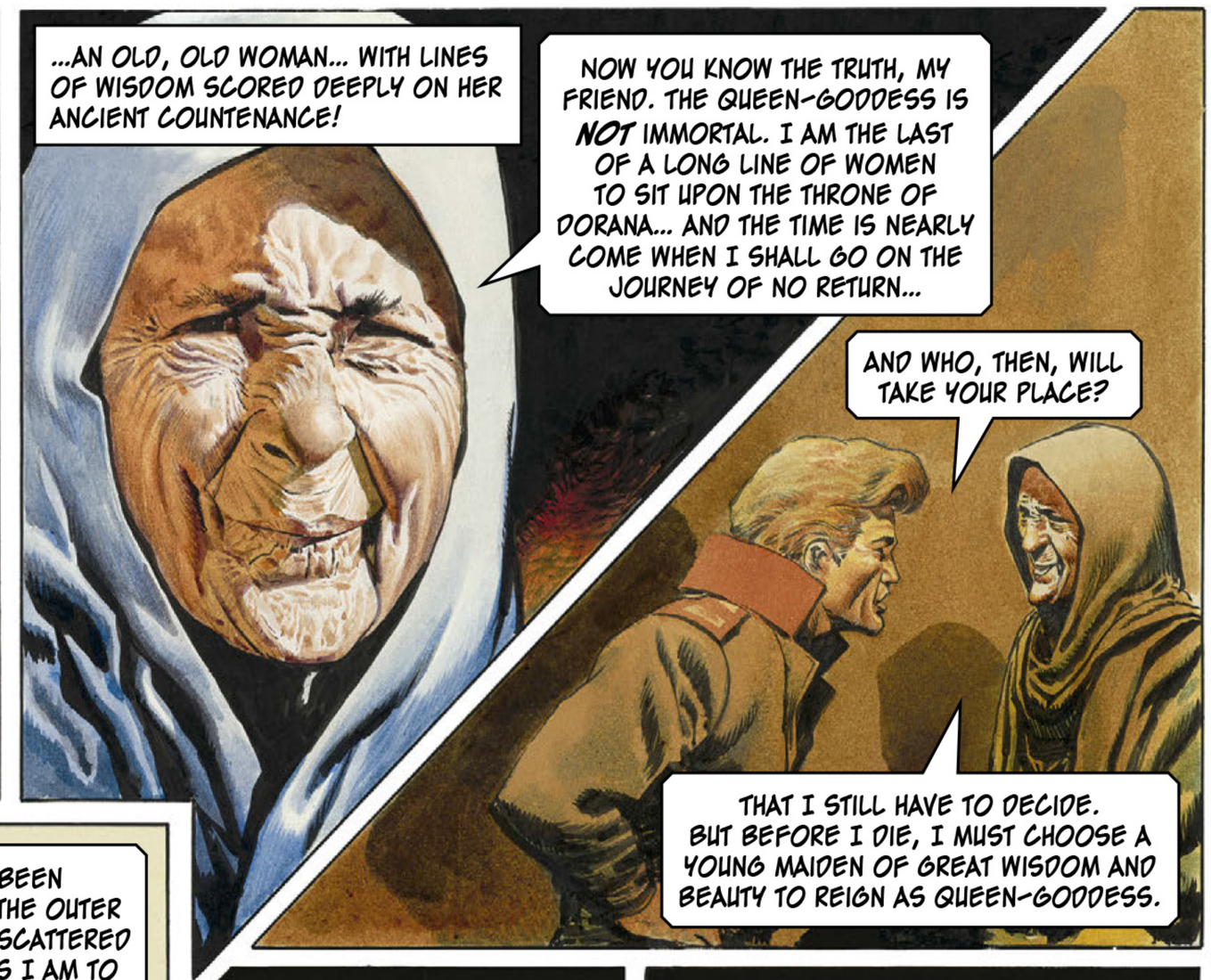
AND THEN... TRIGO WAS IN THE HALL!

HE HURTLED DOWN...

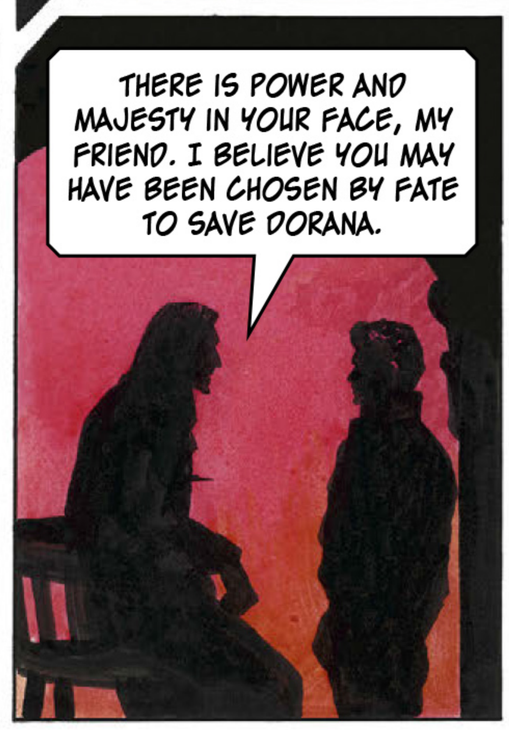
HE SMASHED THE GUARD INTO A SENSELESS HEAP... BUT NOT BEFORE THE ANGUISHED SPASM OF THE MAN'S FINGER HAD DISCHARGED THE GUN!
THE SHOT WAS TRIGO'S UNDOING. RUDELY AROUSED FROM THEIR STUPOR BY THE DEAFENING SOUND, THE REMAINING CATONS REACHED INSTINCTIVELY FOR THEIR WEAPONS.
IT'S TRIGO HIMSELF! SHOOT HIM DOWN!
AAAAAAH!

THE TRIGAN EMPEROR BACKED AWAY DOWN THE HALL, EXCHANGING SHOT FOR SHOT...
AND THEN... A HAND ON HIS SHOULDER... AN URGENT VOICE IN HIS EAR!
COME!
OBEDIENTLY HE STEPPED IN THROUGH THE SECRET DOOR-AND CAME FACE-TO-FACE WITH ONE OF THE PRIESTS OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS.
FOLLOW ME!
TRIGO FOLLOWED HIS OLD GUIDE THROUGH A LABYRINTH OF UNDERGROUND CHAMBERS.
WHERE ARE YOU LEADING ME?
IT IS THE QUEEN-GODDESS'S WISH THAT YOU SHOULD SPEAK WITH HER AGAIN!
ANOTHER CHAMBER... AND THEN HE WAS STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE.
SO! THE MAN WHO RISKED HIS LIFE TO LOOK UPON MY FACE! WE MEET A SECOND TIME!
TRIGO'S HEART BEAT FASTER.
WELL... WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
I AM THINKING THAT IN ALL MY LIFE I HAVE NEVER SEEN A FACE OF SUCH PURE AND RADIANT BEAUTY!
THE QUEEN-GODDESS OF THE LOST CITY RAISED HER HANDS... AND TOOK OFF A MASK!
I AM NOT WHAT I SEEM...!

AND REVEALED HER TRUE SELF TO THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS...
BY ALL THE STARS!


...AN OLD, OLD WOMAN... WITH LINES OF WISDOM SCORED DEEPLY ON HER ANCIENT COUNTENANCE!
NOW YOU KNOW THE TRUTH, MY FRIEND. THE QUEEN-GODDESS IS NOT IMMORTAL. I AM THE LAST OF A LONG LINE OF WOMEN TO SIT UPON THE THRONE OF DORANA... AND THE TIME IS NEARLY COME WHEN I SHALL GO ON THE JOURNEY OF NO RETURN...
AND WHO, THEN, WILL TAKE YOUR PLACE?
THAT I STILL HAVE TO DECIDE. BUT BEFORE I DIE, I MUST CHOOSE A YOUNG MAIDEN OF GREAT WISDOM AND BEAUTY TO REIGN AS QUEEN-GODDESS.

A NOTE OF DESPAIR ENTERED HER VOICE...
BUT NOW THE CITY HAS BEEN CONQUERED BY MEN FROM THE OUTER WORLD AND MY PEOPLE ARE SCATTERED IN THE MOUNTAINS... PERHAPS I AM TO BE THE LAST OF MY LINE!
GREAT ONE... WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME ALL THIS?


THERE IS POWER AND MAJESTY IN YOUR FACE, MY FRIEND. I BELIEVE YOU MAY HAVE BEEN CHOSEN BY FATE TO SAVE DORANA.

TRIGO'S REPLY CAME WITHOUT HESITATION...
I WILL SAVE DORANA, GREAT ONE... OR PERISH IN THE ATTEMPT!

HE TOOK HIS LEAVE OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS AND THE PRIEST LED HIM TO A CHAMBER WHERE THE HANDFUL OF SURVIVORS OF THE CITY GUARDS WERE BINDING THEIR WOUNDS IN DESPAIR.
DORANA IS DONE FOR!
WHAT USE ARE LANCES AND SWORDS AGAINST FIREARMS?

TRIGO'S VOICE RANG OUT COMMANDINGLY!
ON YOUR FEET AND STAND TO ATTENTION, YOU SLUGGARDS! I WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO REGAIN YOUR CITY!

MEANWHILE, TRIGO'S THREE COMRADES-IN-ARMS WERE STILL HIDING NEAR THE PALACE... WAITING...
IT'S ALL QUIET IN THERE NOW.
THE EMPEROR MUST HAVE FAILED!
HE WOULD HAVE PERISHED LIKE AN EMPEROR... FIGHTING TO THE LAST!

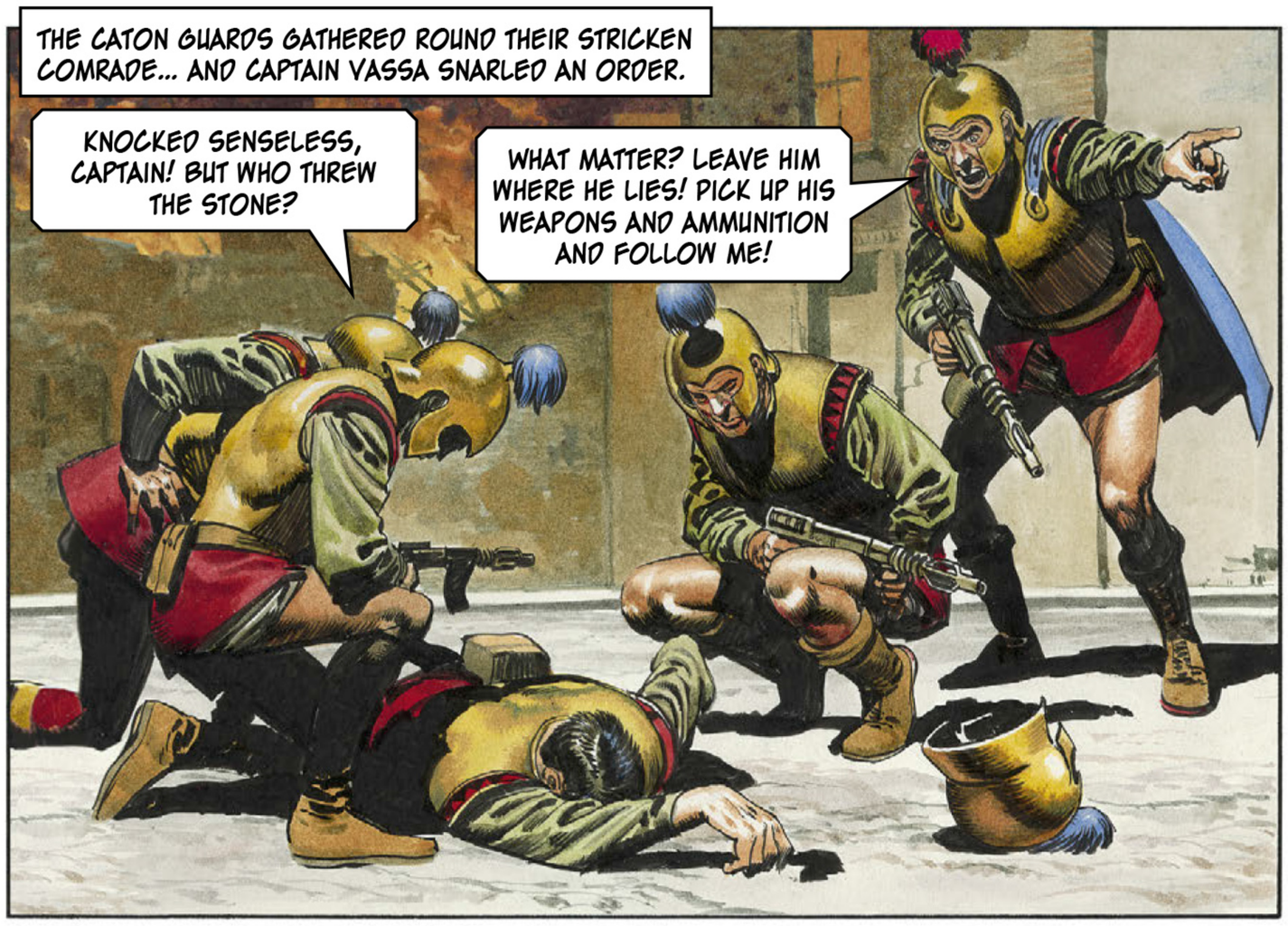
PRESENTLY, THE HEAVILY-ARMED CATONS EMERGED.
WE'LL SCOUR THE CITY FROM END TO END AGAIN... SEEK OUT THE TRIGANS AND ANYONE ELSE WHO DARES TO OFFER RESISTANCE!

CAPTAIN VASSA WAS EXULTANT... HE, AN INSIGNIFICANT JUNIOR OFFICER, HAD WON AN EMPIRE FOR CATO!
THEN WE MUST GET A MESSAGE BACK TO CATO AND TELL THEM TO SEND AN ARMY TO OCCUPY THE CITY! I SHALL PROBABLY BE APPOINTED MILITARY GOVERNOR!

STREET BY STREET, THE BRUTAL CATONS SEARCHED THE DESOLATE CITY... FIRING AT EVERY LIVING THING...

AND THEN...

IT HAPPENED!
UUUUUH...


THE CATON GUARDS GATHERED ROUND THEIR STRICKEN COMRADE... AND CAPTAIN VASSA SNARLED AN ORDER.
KNOCKED SENSELESS, CAPTAIN! BUT WHO THREW THE STONE?
WHAT MATTER? LEAVE HIM WHERE HE LIES! PICK UP HIS WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION AND FOLLOW ME!

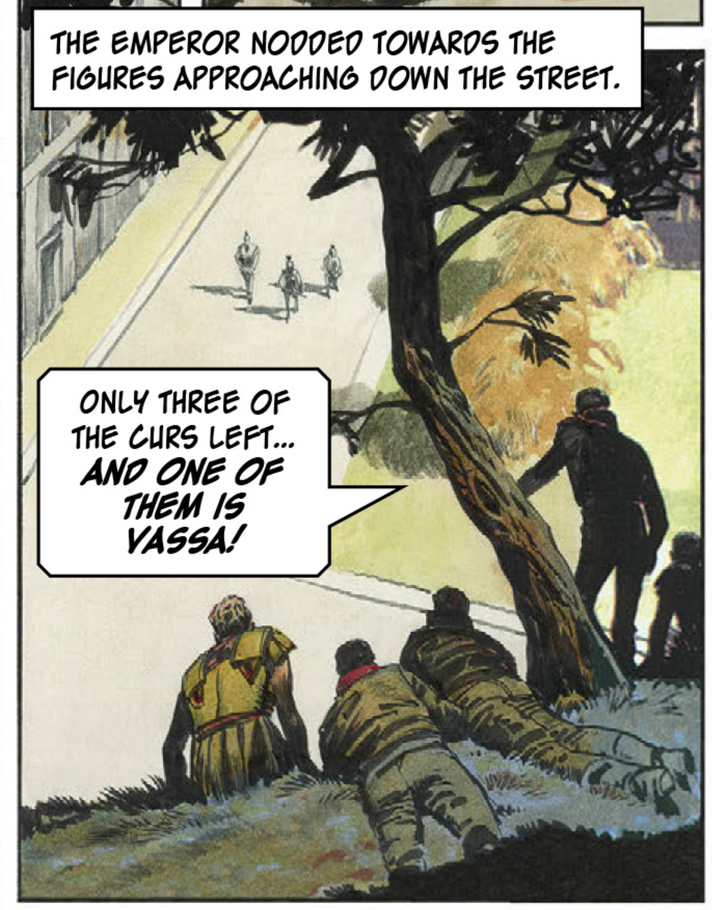
FROM A NEAR-BY ROOFTOP, TRIGO WATCHED... AND SMILED GRIMLY.
YES.
THAT'S ONE LESS! IS THE NEXT TRAP IN READINESS?

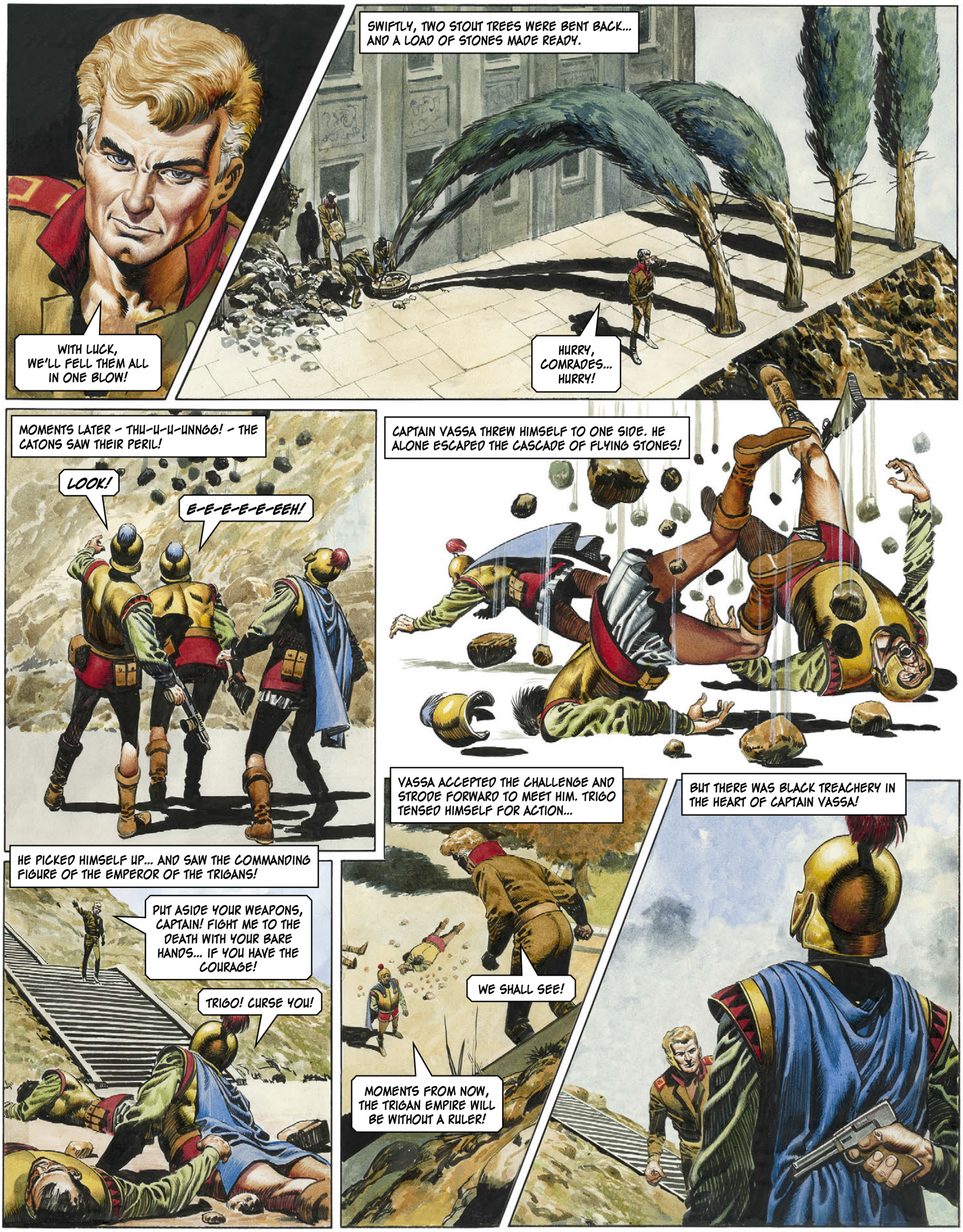
STEALTHILY, THE CATONS MOVED DOWN THE STREET, READY TO SHOOT ANYTHING THAT MOVED...

THE NEXT VICTIM NEVER NOTICED THE FAINT OUTLINE OF A NOOSE BENEATH THE POWDERED RUBBLE...

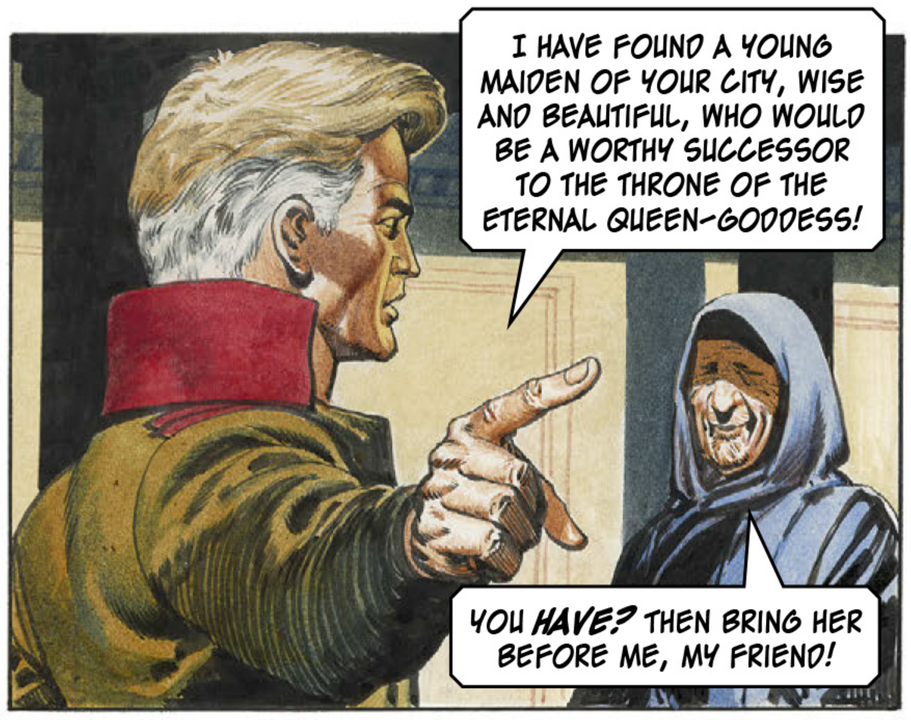
AND THEN...!
AAAAAAH!
BY ALL THE STARS!

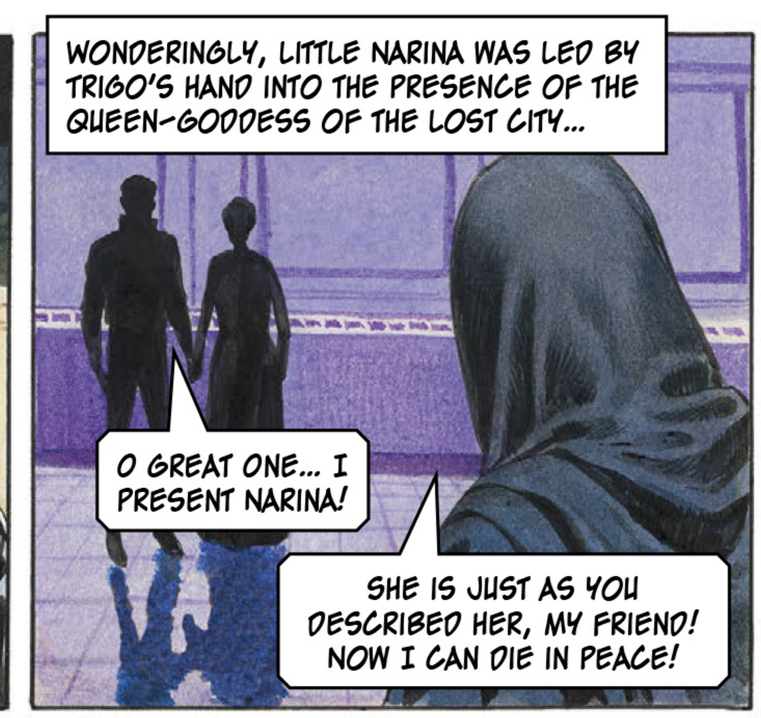
FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS OF THE TREE-TRAP, TRIGO RETURNED TO THE PALACE... TO BE REUNITED WITH HIS TRIGAN COMRADES.
THE STARS BE THANKED... YOU'RE SAFE!

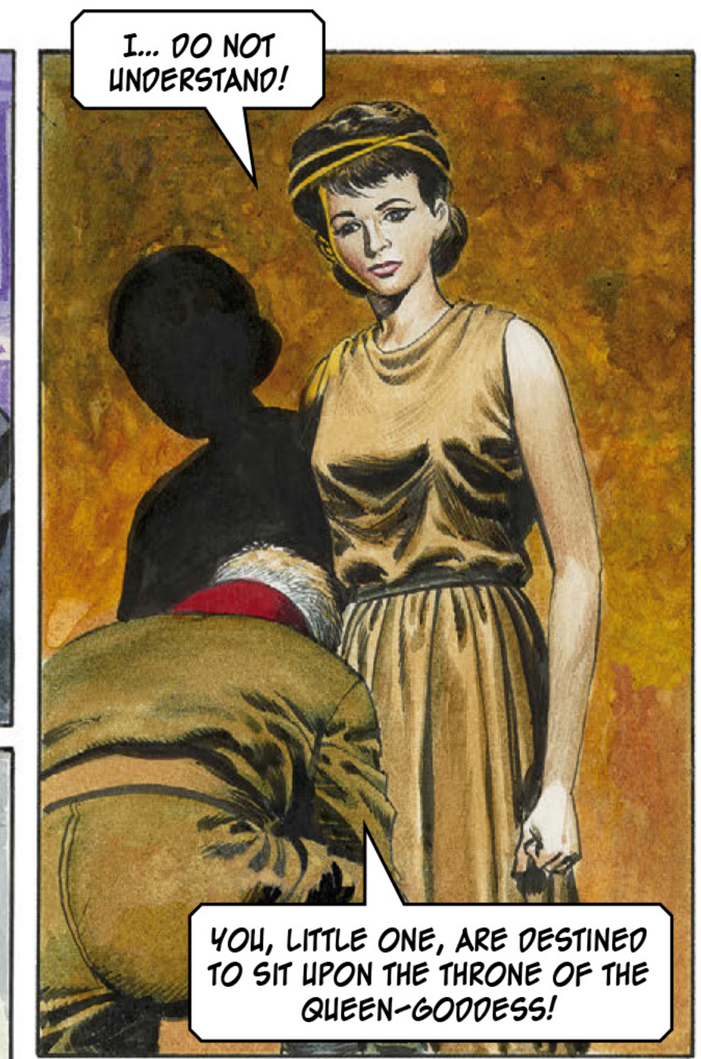

THE EMPEROR NODDED TOWARDS THE FIGURES APPROACHING DOWN THE STREET.
ONLY THREE OF THE CURS LEFT... AND ONE OF THEM IS VASSA!

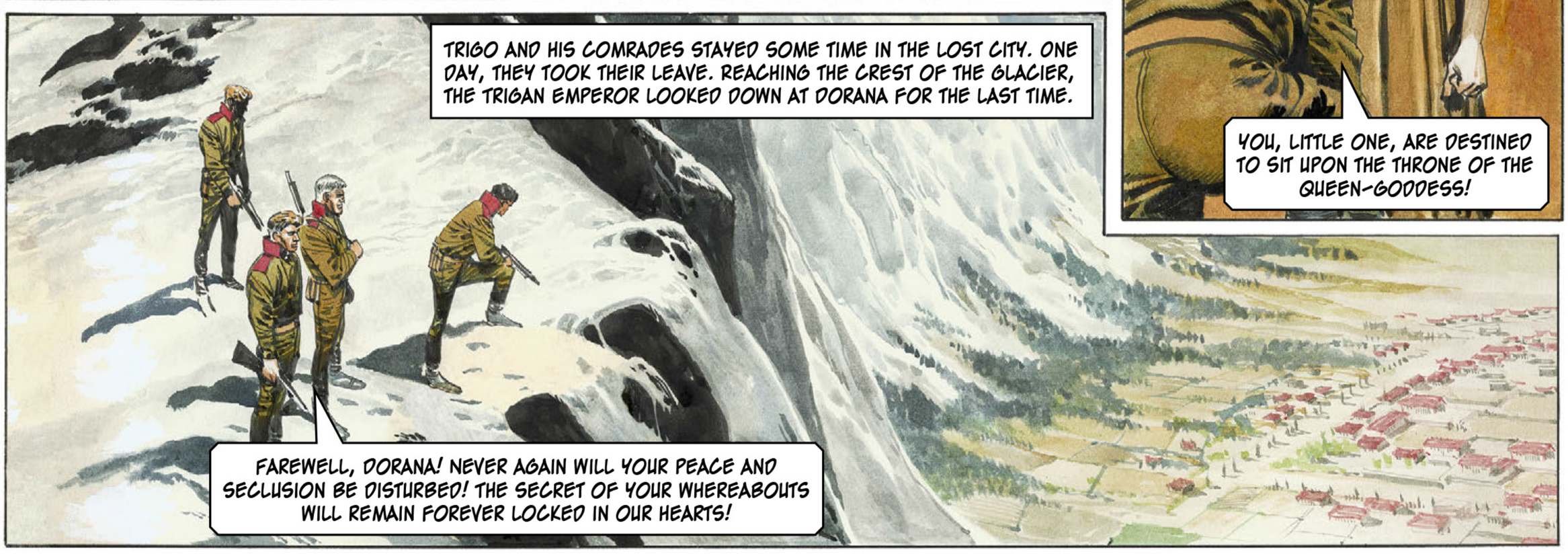

WITH LUCK, WE'LL FELL THEM ALL IN ONE BLOW!
SWIFTLY, TWO STOUT TREES WERE BENT BACK... AND A LOAD OF STONES MADE READY.
HURRY, COMRADES... HURRY!
MOMENTS LATER - THU-U-U-UNNGG! - THE CATONS SAW THEIR PERIL!
LOOK!
E-E-E-E-E-EEH!
CAPTAIN VASSA THREW HIMSELF TO ONE SIDE. HE ALONE ESCAPED THE CASCADE OF FLYING STONES!
HE PICKED HIMSELF UP... AND SAW THE COMMANDING FIGURE OF THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS!
PUT ASIDE YOUR WEAPONS, CAPTAIN! FIGHT ME TO THE DEATH WITH YOUR BARE HANDS... IF YOU HAVE THE COURAGE!
TRIGO! CURSE YOU!
VASSA ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE AND STRODE FORWARD TO MEET HIM. TRIGO TENSED HIMSELF FOR ACTION...
WE SHALL SEE!
MOMENTS FROM NOW, THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WILL BE WITHOUT A RULER!
BUT THERE WAS BLACK TREACHERY IN THE HEART OF CAPTAIN VASSA!

CAPTAIN VASSA'S HAND FLASHED OUT - BLAM-BLAM! TWO BULLETS SCORED TRIGO'S TEMPLE AND THE TRIGAN EMPEROR FELL HEADLONG!
VASSA'S WEAPON WAS AIMED FOR A KILLING SHOT AT THE UNCONSCIOUS FORM... BUT IN THAT SAME INSTANT, ZENO LEAPT!
HEH?
BRAG AND THE OTHERS WERE RACING DOWN THE STEPS TOWARDS THE SCENE... THEY SAW ZENO SLAM INTO THE CATON OFFICER AND WINCED AT THE SHARP CRACK OF THE WEAPON.
ZENO'S SAVED TRIGO! BUT HE'S BEEN HIT!
TRUE ENOUGH... ZENO HAD SAVED HIS EMPEROR'S LIFE AT GREAT COST TO HIMSELF. THEY CARRIED ZENO TO THE GREAT HALL OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS.
YES! THE EMPEROR LIVES!
I DON'T GIVE MUCH FOR POOR ZENO'S CHANCES!
SOME TIME LATER, HIS EYELIDS FLICKERED OPEN...
CAPTAIN ZENO... I OWE YOU MY LIFE!
IMPERIAL MAJESTY... PERHAPS I HAVE NOT MUCH TIME LEFT... I- I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE...
HOARSELY, HE WHISPERED THE STORY OF HIS TREACHERY...
IT- IT WAS I WHO SOLD THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE EXPEDITION TO OUR CATON ENEMIES... FORGIVE- FORGIVE ME, EMPEROR...
ALL IS FORGIVEN AND FORGOTTEN! YOU HAVE CANCELLED OUT YOUR CRIME, ZENO!
NEWS OF THE CATONS' DEFEAT BROUGHT THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY FLOCKING BACK FROM THE SHELTER OF THE MOUNTAINS. WITH THEM CAME THE GIRL NARINA, WHO HAD BEFRIENDED THE TRIGANS.
DOES HE HAVE A CHANCE, NARINA?
WHILE HE STILL LIVES THERE IS ALWAYS A CHANCE!
THANKS TO NARINA'S CARE, ZENO SURVIVED. SOME DAYS LATER, TRIGO WAS RECEIVED AGAIN BY THE ANCIENT QUEEN-GODDESS OF THE LOST CITY.
TRIGO! YOU HAVE SAVED DORANA... AND NOW I CAN DEPART WITH A QUIET HEART ON THE JOURNEY OF NO RETURN... AFTER I HAVE FOUND MY SUCCESSOR.


I HAVE FOUND A YOUNG MAIDEN OF YOUR CITY, WISE AND BEAUTIFUL, WHO WOULD BE A WORTHY SUCCESSOR TO THE THRONE OF THE ETERNAL QUEEN-GODDESS!
YOU *HAVE?* THEN BRING HER BEFORE ME, MY FRIEND!


WONDERINGLY, LITTLE NARINA WAS LED BY TRIGO'S HAND INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS OF THE LOST CITY...
O GREAT ONE... I PRESENT NARINA!
SHE IS JUST AS YOU DESCRIBED HER, MY FRIEND! NOW I CAN DIE IN PEACE!


I... DO NOT UNDERSTAND!
YOU, LITTLE ONE, ARE DESTINED TO SIT UPON THE THRONE OF THE QUEEN-GODDESS!


TRIGO AND HIS COMRADES STAYED SOME TIME IN THE LOST CITY. ONE DAY, THEY TOOK THEIR LEAVE. REACHING THE CREST OF THE GLACIER, THE TRIGAN EMPEROR LOOKED DOWN AT DORANA FOR THE LAST TIME.
FAREWELL, DORANA! NEVER AGAIN WILL YOUR PEACE AND SECLUSION BE DISTURBED! THE SECRET OF YOUR WHEREABOUTS WILL REMAIN FOREVER LOCKED IN OUR HEARTS!

AIDED BY THE CATONS' WEAPONS, THE NIGHTMARE JOURNEY ACROSS THE FORBIDDEN CONTINENT WAS COMPLETED SAFELY. THE DAY ARRIVED WHEN THEY STOOD ONCE MORE ON THE SHORES OF THE GREAT OCEAN.
WHAT DO WE DO NOW? *SWIM* BACK TO TRIGAN?
NO! LOOK!

FAR ON THE HORIZON, THEY SAW THE MASSIVE VESSELS OF THE TRIGAN BATTLE FLEET.
THEY MUST BE OUT SEARCHING FOR US!
LET'S LIGHT A SIGNAL FIRE.
YAHOO!
THE GREAT JOURNEY WAS OVER...

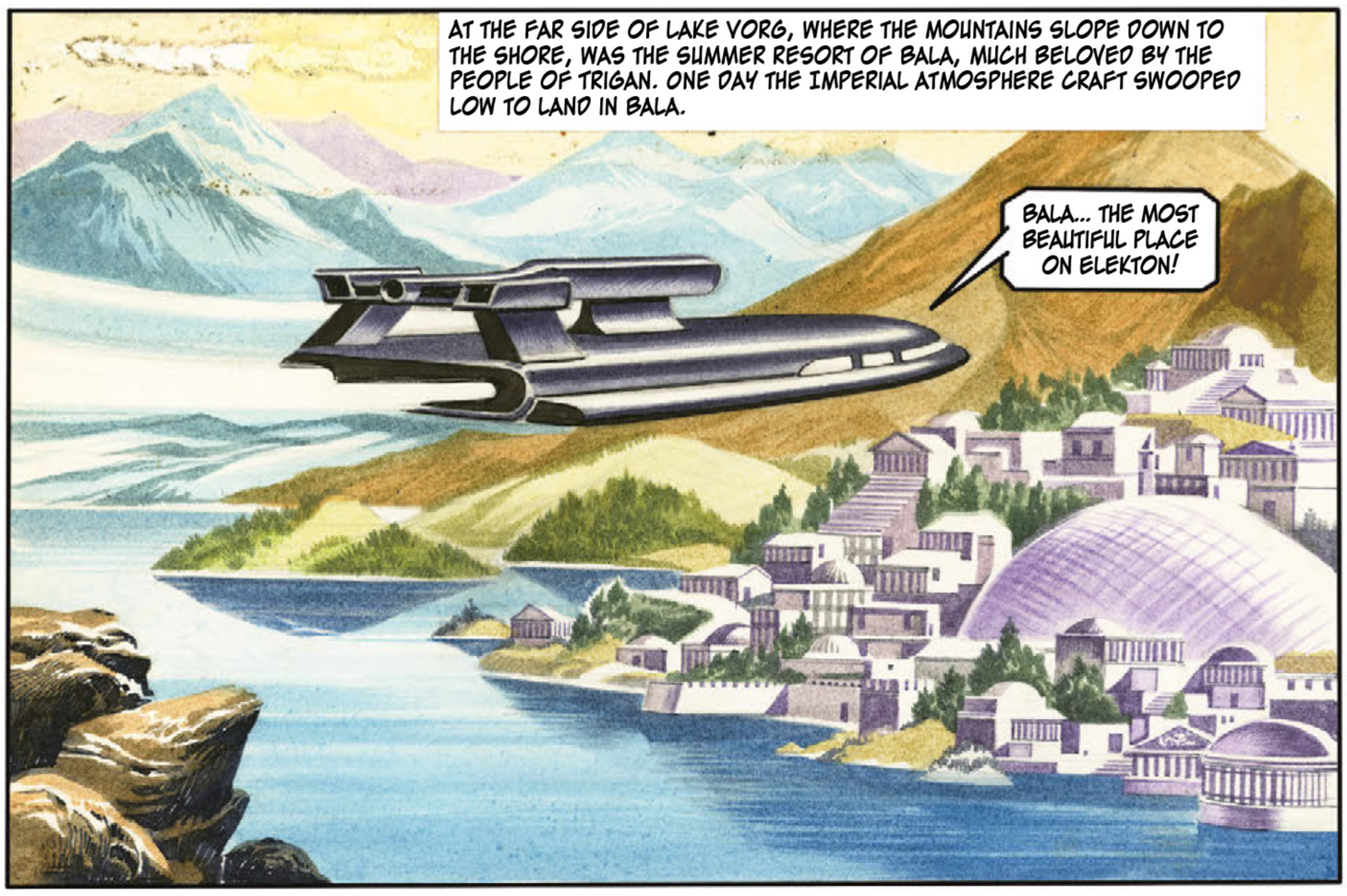
XVII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE TERROR OF MOUNT SPYX

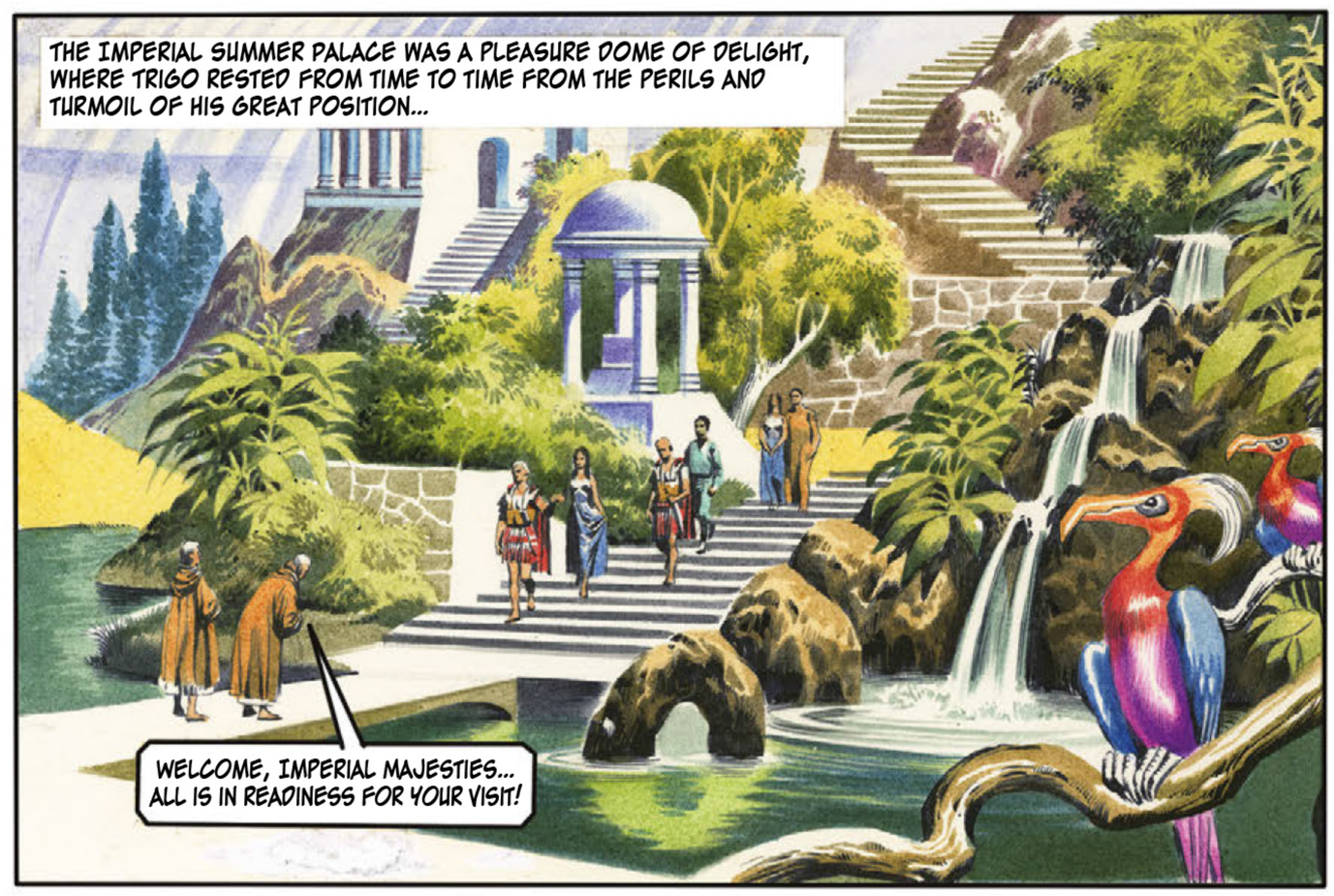
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 383-390

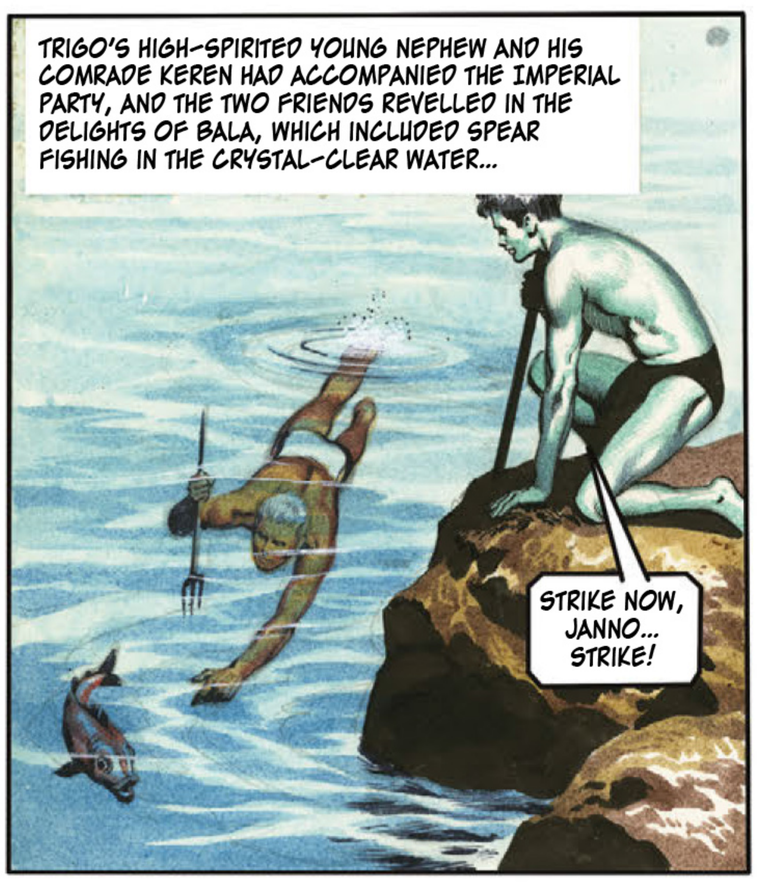
17th May – 5th July 1969

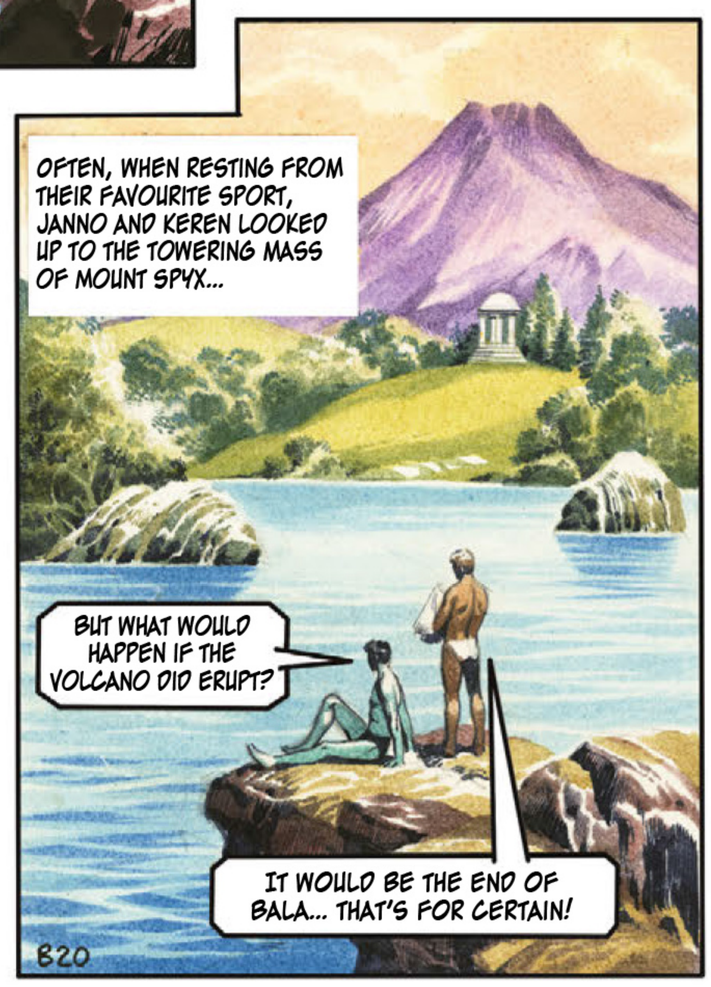

AT THE FAR SIDE OF LAKE VORG, WHERE THE MOUNTAINS SLOPE DOWN TO THE SHORE, WAS THE SUMMER RESORT OF BALA, MUCH BELOVED BY THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN. ONE DAY THE IMPERIAL ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SWOOPED LOW TO LAND IN BALA.
BALA... THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE ON ELEKTON!

THE CRAFT WAS TAKING THE EMPEROR TRIGO AND HIS EMPRESS URSA TO THEIR SUMMER PALACE THERE...
BALA IS INDEED BEAUTIFUL... BUT THE SIGHT OF MOUNT SPYX ALWAYS STRIKES TERROR IN MY HEART!
OLD FATHER SPYX? WHAT HARM COULD HE DO YOU, MY DEAR?

MOUNT SPYX HAS NOT ERUPTED IN LIVING MEMORY, URSA!

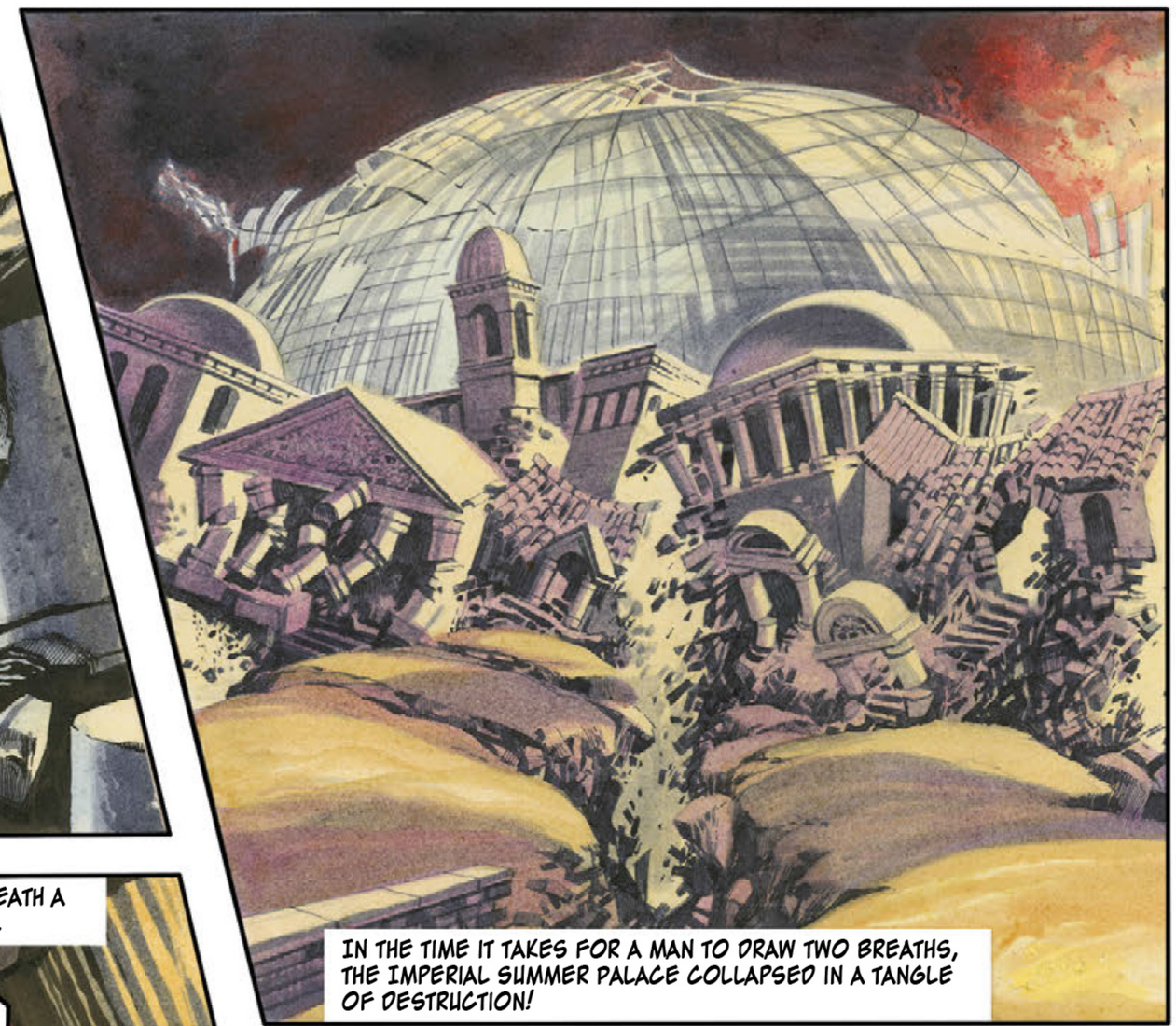

THE IMPERIAL SUMMER PALACE WAS A PLEASURE DOME OF DELIGHT, WHERE TRIGO RESTED FROM TIME TO TIME FROM THE PERILS AND TURMOIL OF HIS GREAT POSITION...
WELCOME, IMPERIAL MAJESTIES... ALL IS IN READINESS FOR YOUR VISIT!


TRIGO'S HIGH-SPIRITED YOUNG NEPHEW AND HIS COMRADE KEREN HAD ACCOMPANIED THE IMPERIAL PARTY, AND THE TWO FRIENDS REVELLED IN THE DELIGHTS OF BALA, WHICH INCLUDED SPEAR FISHING IN THE CRYSTAL-CLEAR WATER...
STRIKE NOW, JANNO... STRIKE!


OFTEN, WHEN RESTING FROM THEIR FAVOURITE SPORT, JANNO AND KEREN LOOKED UP TO THE TOWERING MASS OF MOUNT SPYX...
BUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE VOLCANO DID ERUPT?
IT WOULD BE THE END OF BALA... THAT'S FOR CERTAIN!
B20

TWO NIGHTS AFTER THEIR ARRIVAL, JANNO WAS RUDELY AWAKENED BY A DIN LIKE A THUNDERCLAP, AND HIS BED SHOOK BENEATH HIM...
WHAT WAS THAT?

THEN... HE SAW HIS PERIL!


IN THE TIME IT TAKES FOR A MAN TO DRAW TWO BREATHS, THE IMPERIAL SUMMER PALACE COLLAPSED IN A TANGLE OF DESTRUCTION!

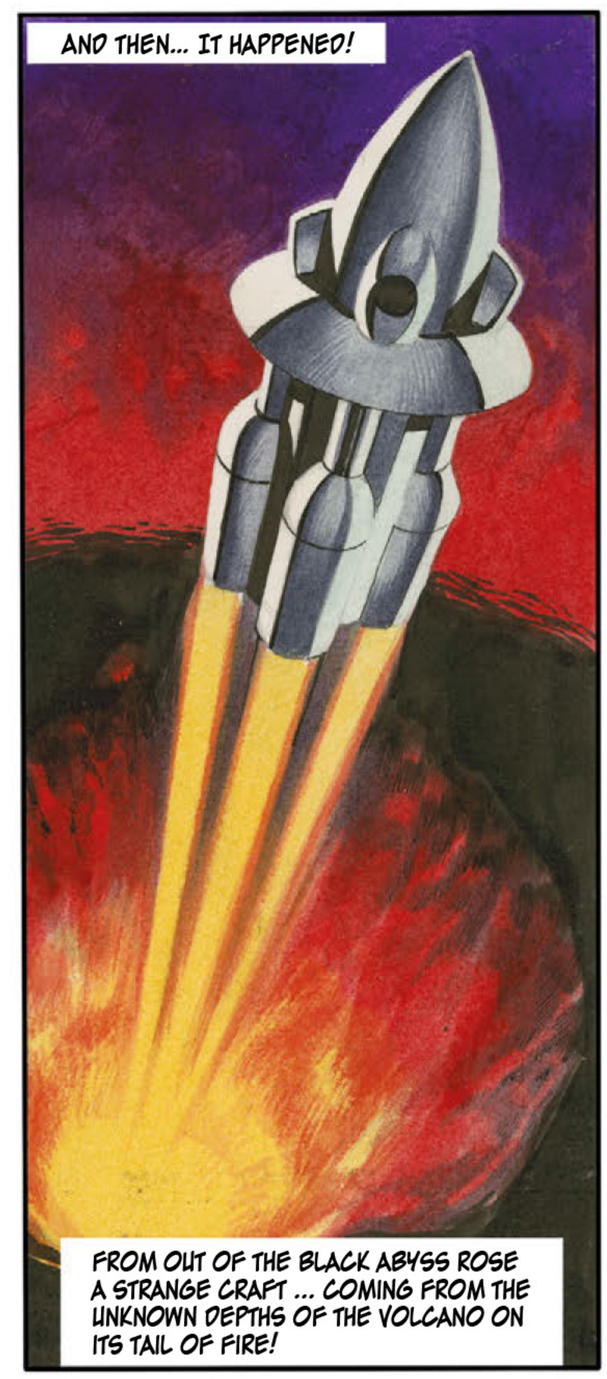
KEREN FOUGHT HIS WAY OUT OF HIS RUINED CHAMBER AND LOOKED TOWARDS THE GREAT VOLCANO. GROPING HIS WAY BLINDLY THROUGH THE SMOKE AND TURMOIL, HE HEARD A CRY FOR HELP...

IT WAS JANNO... PINNED BENEATH A MASS OF BROKEN MASONRY...
I... I'M TRAPPED!

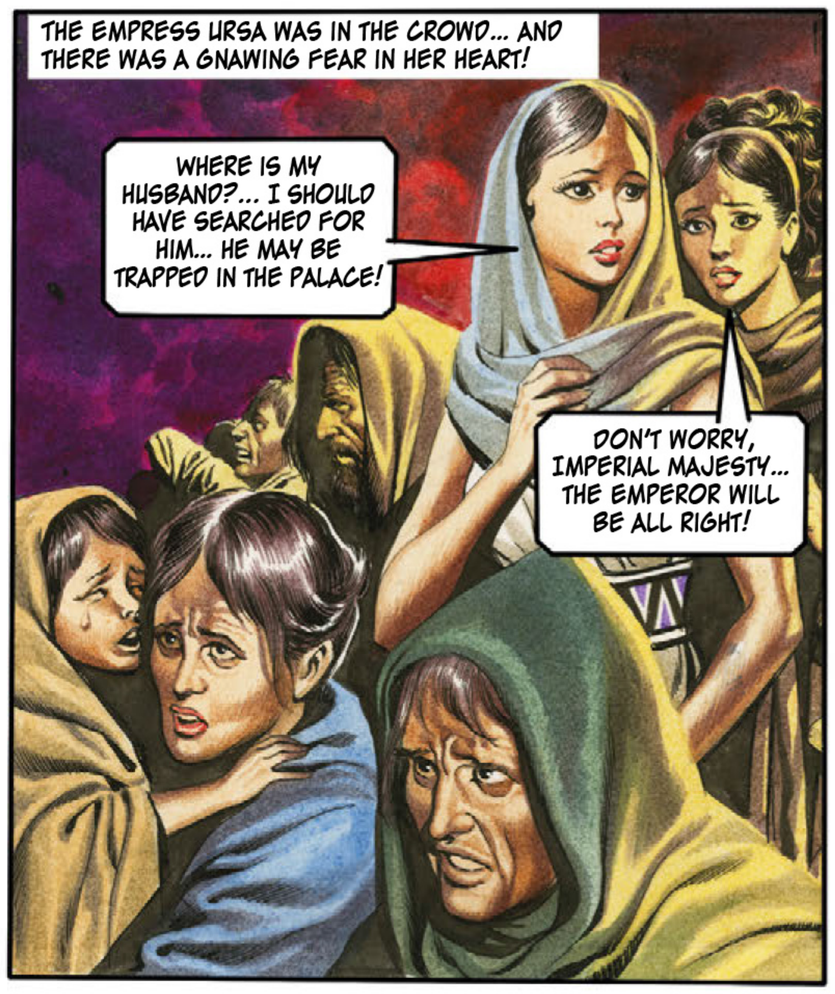
KEREN TRIED TO FREE JANNO IN VAIN...
... IF I CAN'T MOVE THIS THING, WE'LL PERISH TOGETHER!

MEANWHILE, THE SURVIVORS FROM THE FIRST FEARFUL VOLCANIC TREMOR WERE FLEEING DOWN TO THE LAKE SHORE TO ESCAPE THE WALL OF MOLTEN LAVA...
THERE'S NO ESCAPE! THE CRAFT ARE ALL DESTROYED!
MAKE FOR THE WATER... IT'S OUR ONLY HOPE.

HIGH ABOVE THE STRICKEN CITY, THE GUSH OF LAVA CEASED TO POUR FROM THE LIPS OF MOUNT SPYX... AND ALL WAS SILENT...


AND THEN... IT HAPPENED!
FROM OUT OF THE BLACK ABYSS ROSE A STRANGE CRAFT ... COMING FROM THE UNKNOWN DEPTHS OF THE VOLCANO ON ITS TAIL OF FIRE!

LIT BY THE LURID FLAMES OF THE BURNING TOWN, THE PEOPLE CROWDED TO THE SHORE OF LAKE VORG, WHERE THEY COULD GET NO FARTHER...


THE EMPRESS URSA WAS IN THE CROWD... AND THERE WAS A GNAWING FEAR IN HER HEART!
WHERE IS MY HUSBAND?... I SHOULD HAVE SEARCHED FOR HIM... HE MAY BE TRAPPED IN THE PALACE!
DON'T WORRY, IMPERIAL MAJESTY... THE EMPEROR WILL BE ALL RIGHT!

THEN ALL EYES TURNED SKYWARDS, AS A STRANGE CRAFT DESCENDED TO THE LAKE SHORE UPON A TAIL OF STABBING FLAME...
LOOK... SOMEONE'S COME TO SAVE US!
BUT WHAT CRAFT IS THAT? I NEVER SAW THE LIKE BEFORE!

IT CAME TO REST, AND FROM THE TOP OF THE TOWERING CYLINDER, A STRANGE PURPLE LIGHT BURNED...

THE LIGHT PLAYED OVER THE CROWD, AND IMMEDIATELY THE PEOPLE SANK TO THEIR KNEES AND BEGAN TO CHANT IN UNISON...
WE WILL OBEY... WE WILL OBEY... WE WILL OBEY...

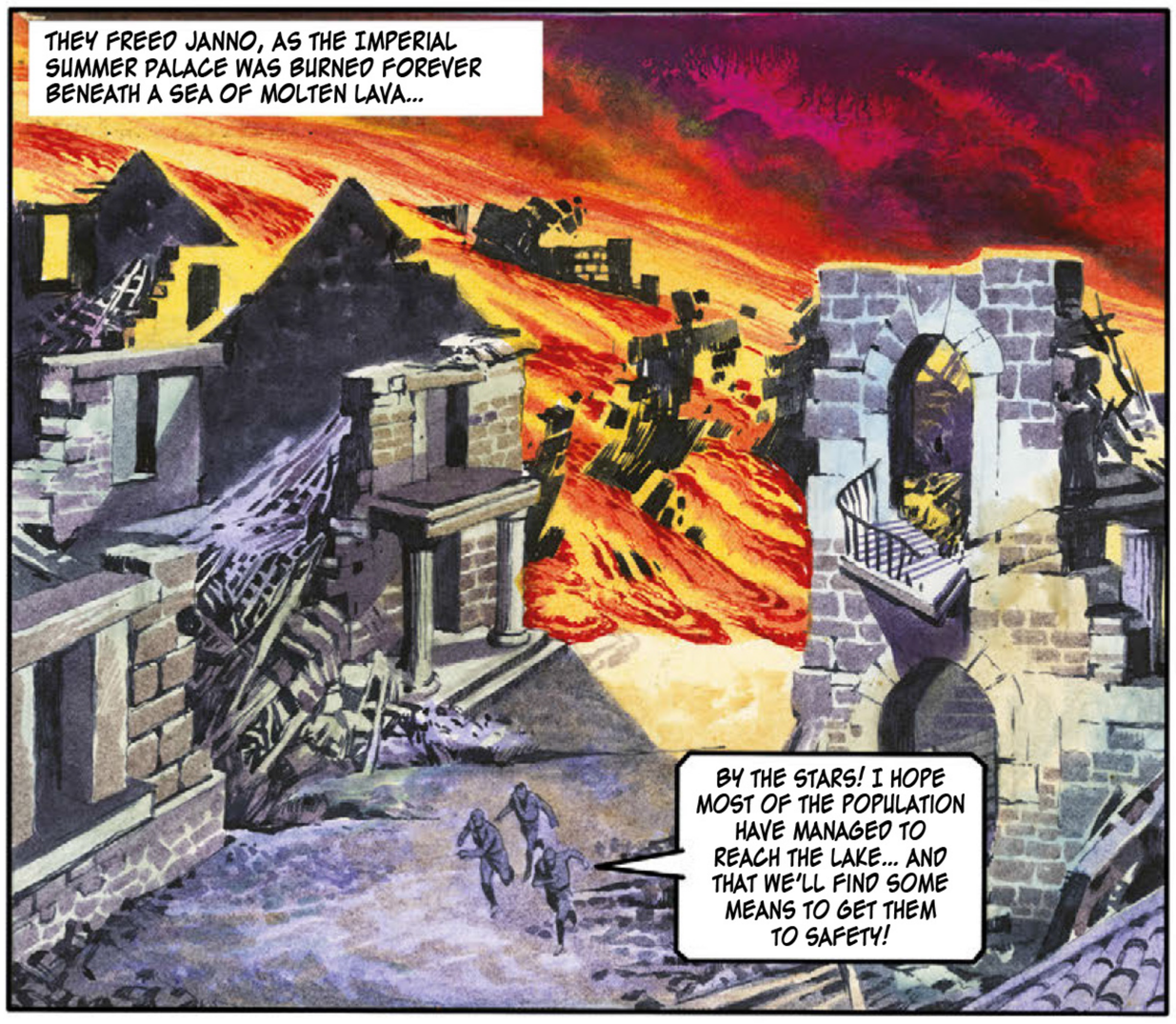
THEN A GREAT DOOR SLID OPEN IN THE VAST HULL AND, AS IF AT A WORD OF COMMAND, THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO FILE UP INTO THE MYSTERIOUS CRAFT...
B21

WHEN THE LAST PERSON WAS SWALLOWED UP, THE DOOR CLOSED, AND THEN THE CRAFT ROSE AGAIN INTO THE NIGHT SKY...

MEANWHILE, IN THE RUINS OF THE IMPERIAL SUMMER PALACE, KEREN CROUCHED BY HIS FRIEND JANNO, WHO WAS TRAPPED UNDER A MASS OF FALLEN MASONRY...
GO WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME, KEREN... SEE, THE WALL OF LAVA HAS REACHED US... SOON THE PALACE WILL BE ENGULFED!
I SHALL NOT LEAVE YOU... WE PERISH TOGETHER!

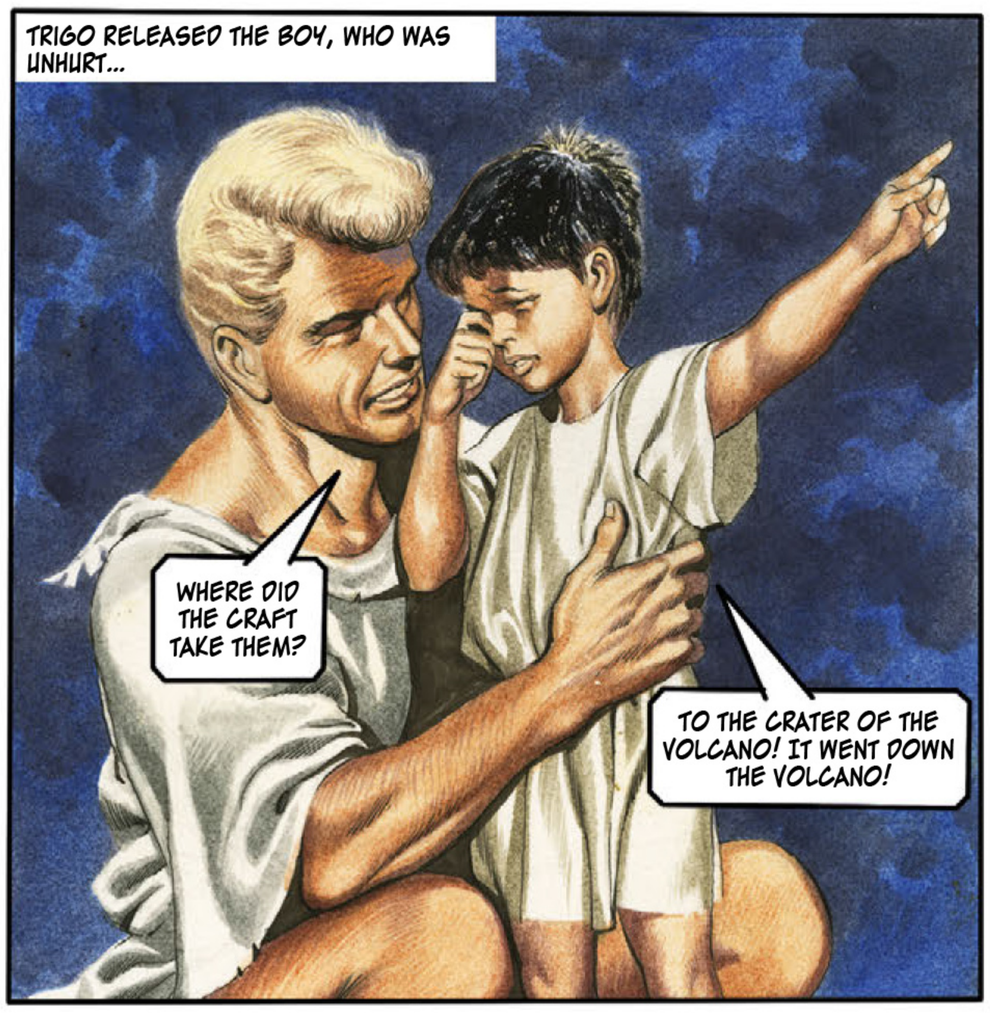
AND THEN A TALL FORM STUMBLED INTO THE RUINED CHAMBER... THEY RECOGNISED THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS!
UUUUGH!
UNCLE TRIGO!

THERE WAS A BRUISE ON TRIGO'S BROW, AND HE WAS HALF-DAZED, BUT HE SAW THE SITUATION AT A GLANCE, AND LENT HIS GREAT STRENGTH TO FREEING HIS NEPHEW...
WE HAVEN'T... MUCH...TIME...
IT'S MOVING! I'M NEARLY FREE!


THEY FREED JANNO, AS THE IMPERIAL SUMMER PALACE WAS BURNED FOREVER BENEATH A SEA OF MOLTEN LAVA...
BY THE STARS! I HOPE MOST OF THE POPULATION HAVE MANAGED TO REACH THE LAKE... AND THAT WE'LL FIND SOME MEANS TO GET THEM TO SAFETY!

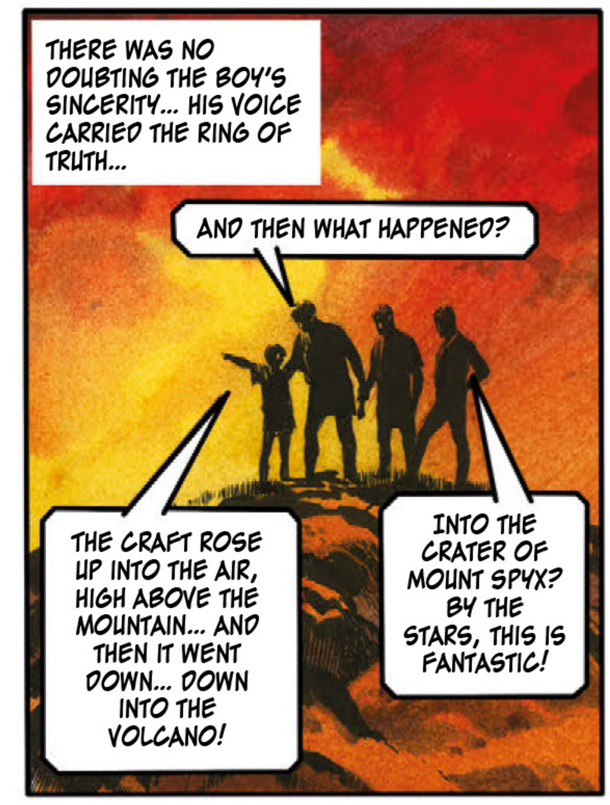
BUT... WHEN THEY REACHED THE LAKE...
WHERE IS EVERYBODY!

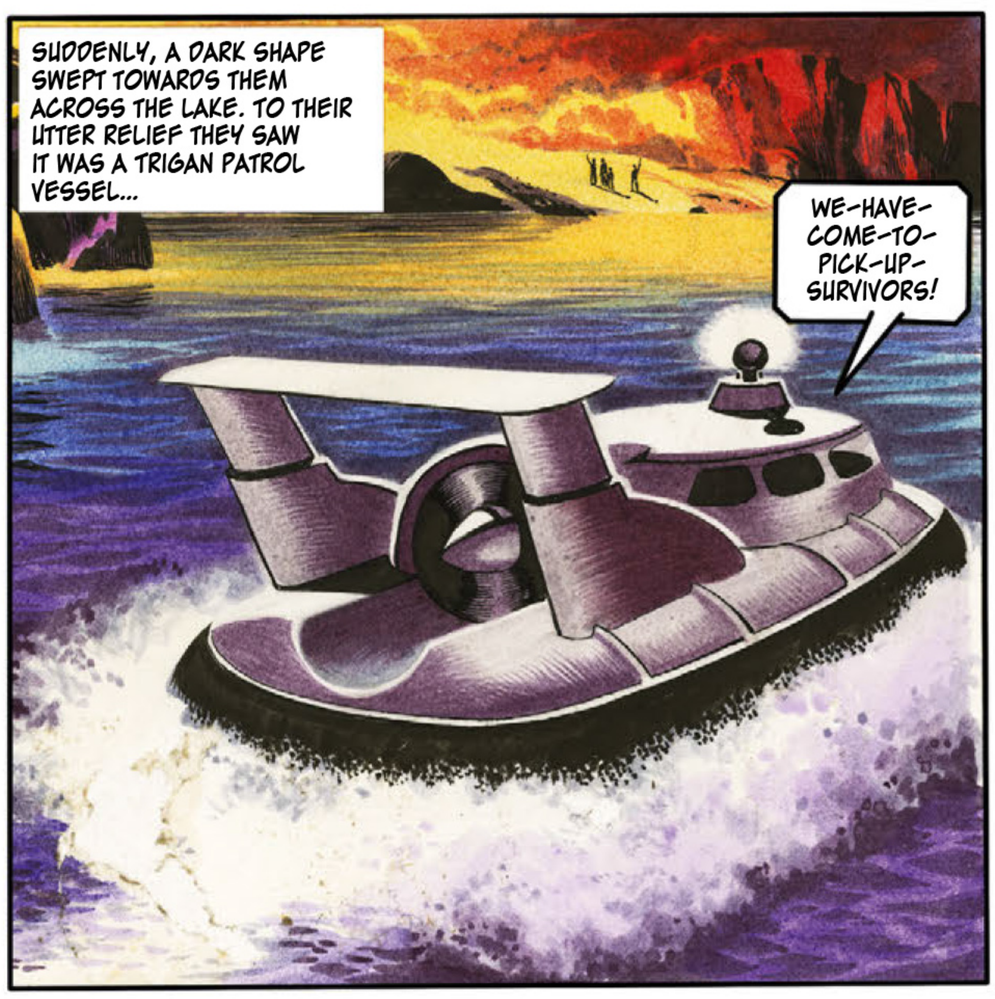
A FRIGHTENED VOICE ANSWERED THEM... AND A SMALL FIGURE CRAWLED OUT FROM BEHIND A NEARBY ROCK...
THEY'VE ALL BEEN TAKEN AWAY! THE STRANGE CRAFT TOOK THEM AWAY... BUT I WASN'T ABLE TO FOLLOW, BECAUSE MY FOOT IS TRAPPED.

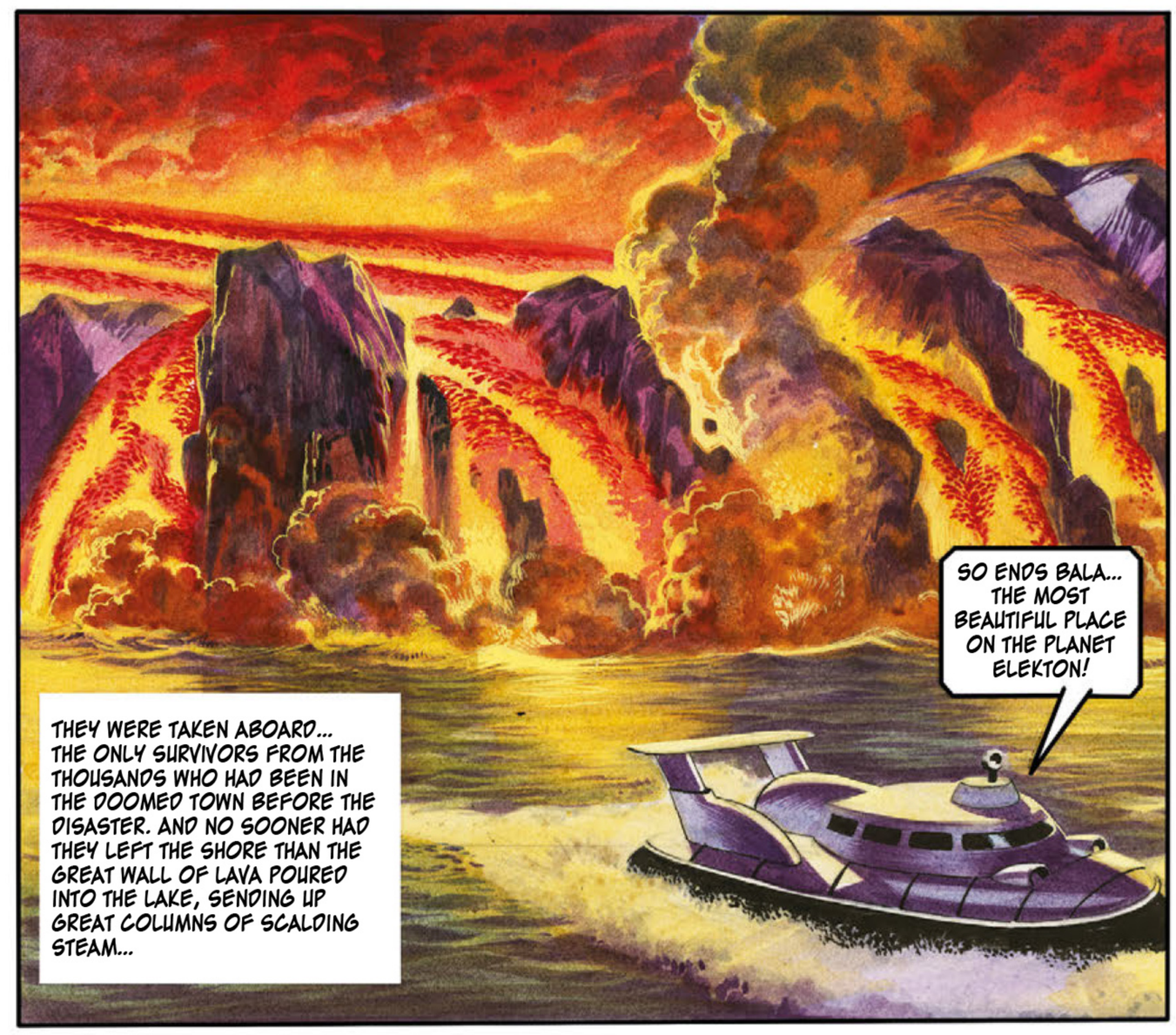

TRIGO RELEASED THE BOY, WHO WAS UNHURT...
WHERE DID THE CRAFT TAKE THEM?
TO THE CRATER OF THE VOLCANO! IT WENT DOWN THE VOLCANO!

TRIGO STARED DISBELIEVINGLY AT THE BOY...
WHAT NONSENSE IS THIS YOU ARE TELLING ME, SON?
... IT IS TRUE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY! WITH MY OWN EYES I SAW THE EMPRESS AND THE PEOPLE GO INTO THE STRANGE CRAFT...

A BEAUTIFUL PURPLE LIGHT BURNED FROM THE TOP OF IT, AND I SEEMED TO HEAR A VOICE I COULD NOT DISOBEY TELLING ME TO GO INTO THE CRAFT WITH THE OTHERS. BUT I COULDN'T MOVE, BECAUSE MY FOOT WAS TRAPPED...


THERE WAS NO DOUBTING THE BOY'S SINCERITY... HIS VOICE CARRIED THE RING OF TRUTH...
AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?
THE CRAFT ROSE UP INTO THE AIR, HIGH ABOVE THE MOUNTAIN... AND THEN IT WENT DOWN... DOWN INTO THE VOLCANO!
INTO THE CRATER OF MOUNT SPYX? BY THE STARS, THIS IS FANTASTIC!

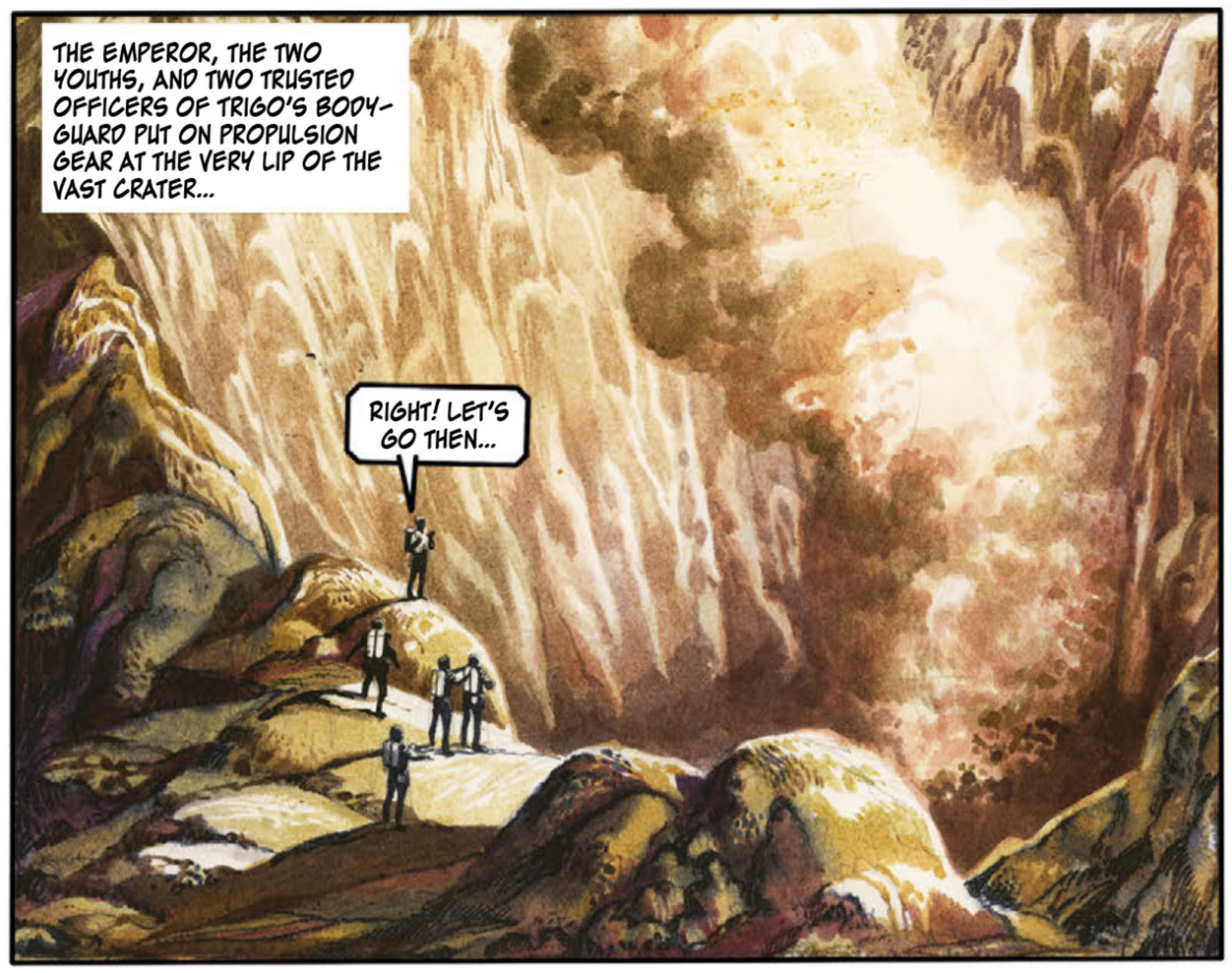

SUDDENLY, A DARK SHAPE SWEPT TOWARDS THEM ACROSS THE LAKE. TO THEIR UTTER RELIEF THEY SAW IT WAS A TRIGAN PATROL VESSEL...
WE-HAVE-COME-TO-PICK-UP-SURVIVORS!


SO ENDS BALA... THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE ON THE PLANET ELEKTON!
THEY WERE TAKEN ABOARD... THE ONLY SURVIVORS FROM THE THOUSANDS WHO HAD BEEN IN THE DOOMED TOWN BEFORE THE DISASTER. AND NO SOONER HAD THEY LEFT THE SHORE THAN THE GREAT WALL OF LAVA POURED INTO THE LAKE, SENDING UP GREAT COLUMNS OF SCALDING STEAM...

TRIGO GAZED BACK AT THE FROWNING CREST OF MOUNT SPYX...
IS IT REALLY TRUE? WERE MY WIFE AND ALL THOSE PEOPLE REALLY TAKEN DOWN INTO THE HEART OF OLD FATHER SPYX?

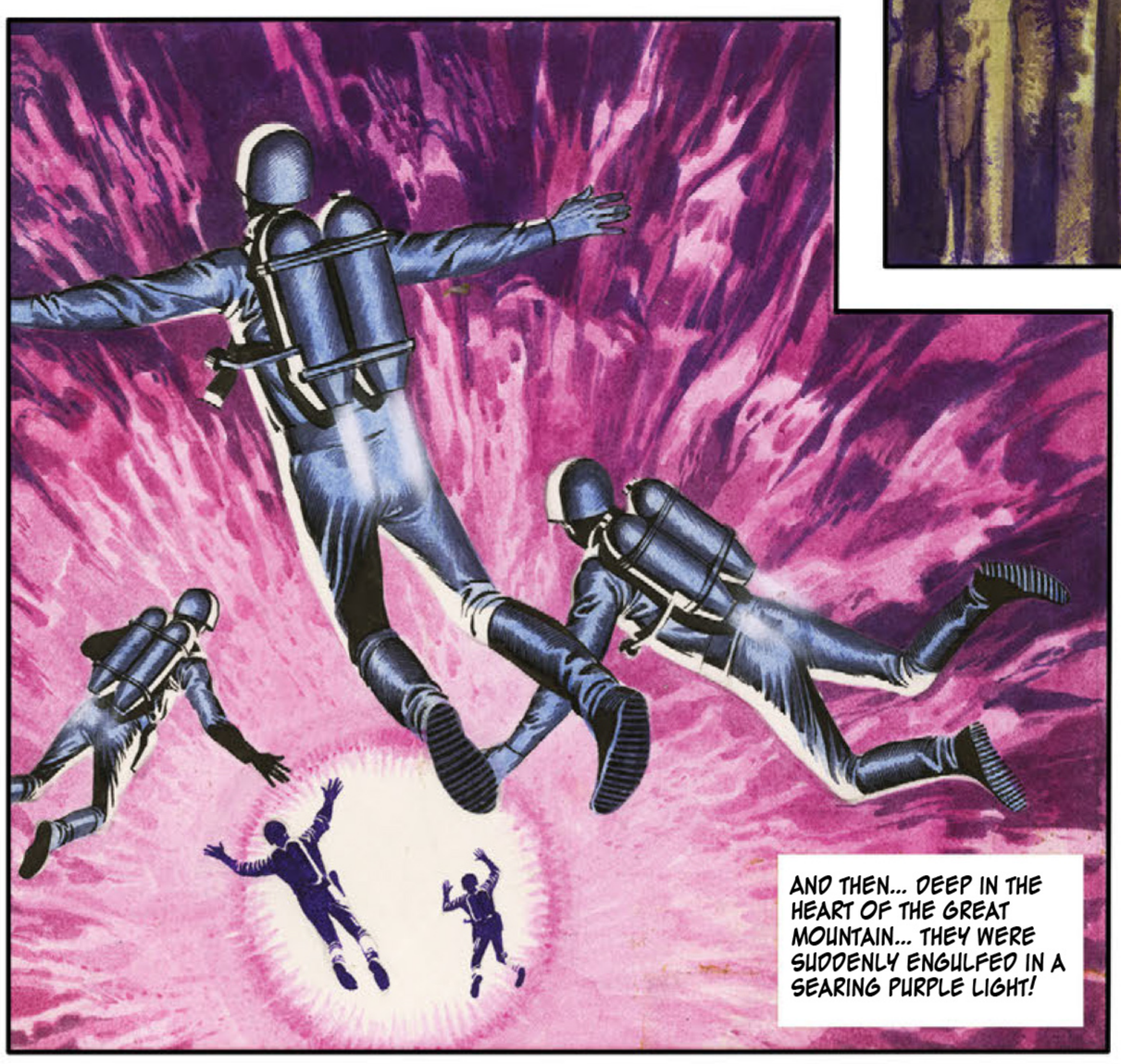
MANY DAYS LATER, WHEN THE LAVA HAD SOMEWHAT COOLED, A FORCE OF TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT LANDED ON THE STILL SMOKING SLOPES OF THE MOUNTAIN...

TRIGO WAS AMONGST THE FIRST TO ALIGHT. WITH HIM WERE KEREN AND JANNO...

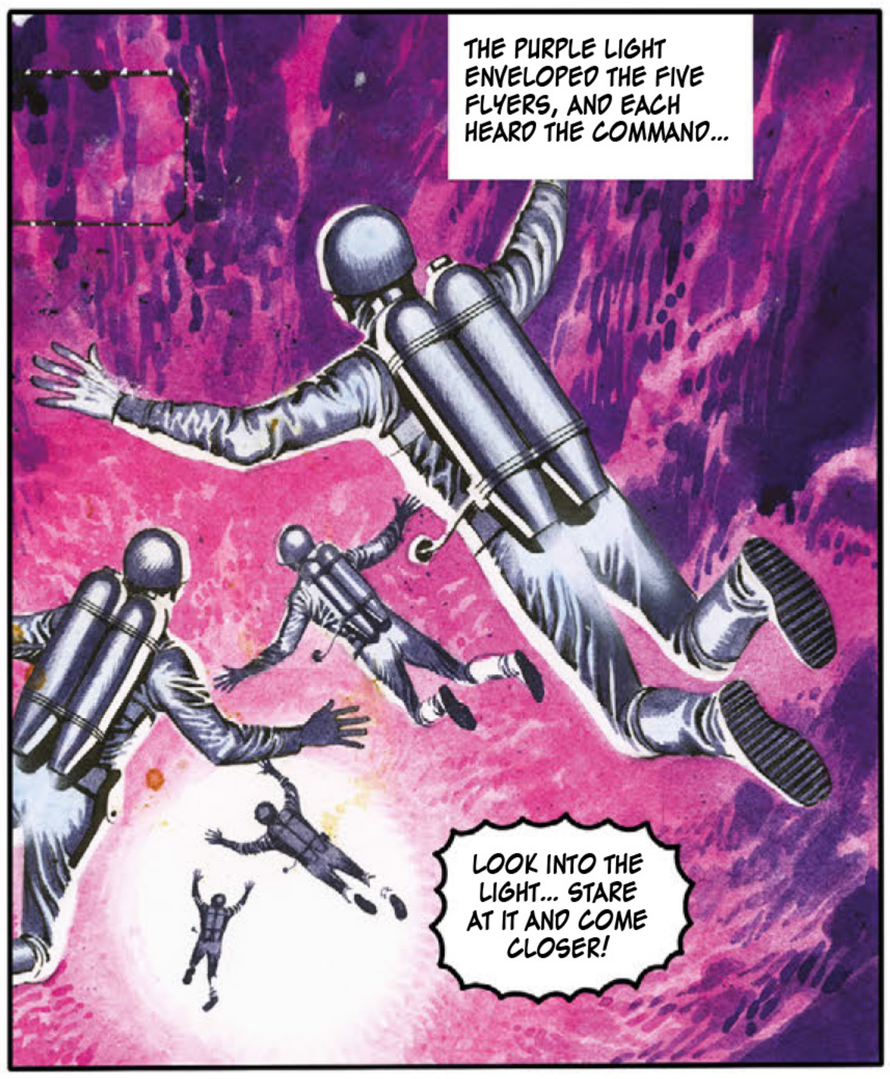

THE EMPEROR, THE TWO YOUTHS, AND TWO TRUSTED OFFICERS OF TRIGO'S BODY-GUARD PUT ON PROPULSION GEAR AT THE VERY LIP OF THE VAST CRATER...
RIGHT! LET'S GO THEN...

GOOD LUCK!
A WAVE OF FAREWELL TO THE OTHERS, AND THEN LED BY THE EMPEROR HIMSELF... THEY LAUNCHED THEMSELVES INTO THE DARK ABYSS OF MOUNT SPYX!

DOWN... DOWN... DOWN...


AND THEN... DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE GREAT MOUNTAIN... THEY WERE SUDDENLY ENGULFED IN A SEARING PURPLE LIGHT!

AND JANNO SEEMED TO HEAR A COMMANDING VOICE RINGING IN HIS EARS... "COME DOWN!... COME CLOSER!... CLOSER TO THE LIGHT!"

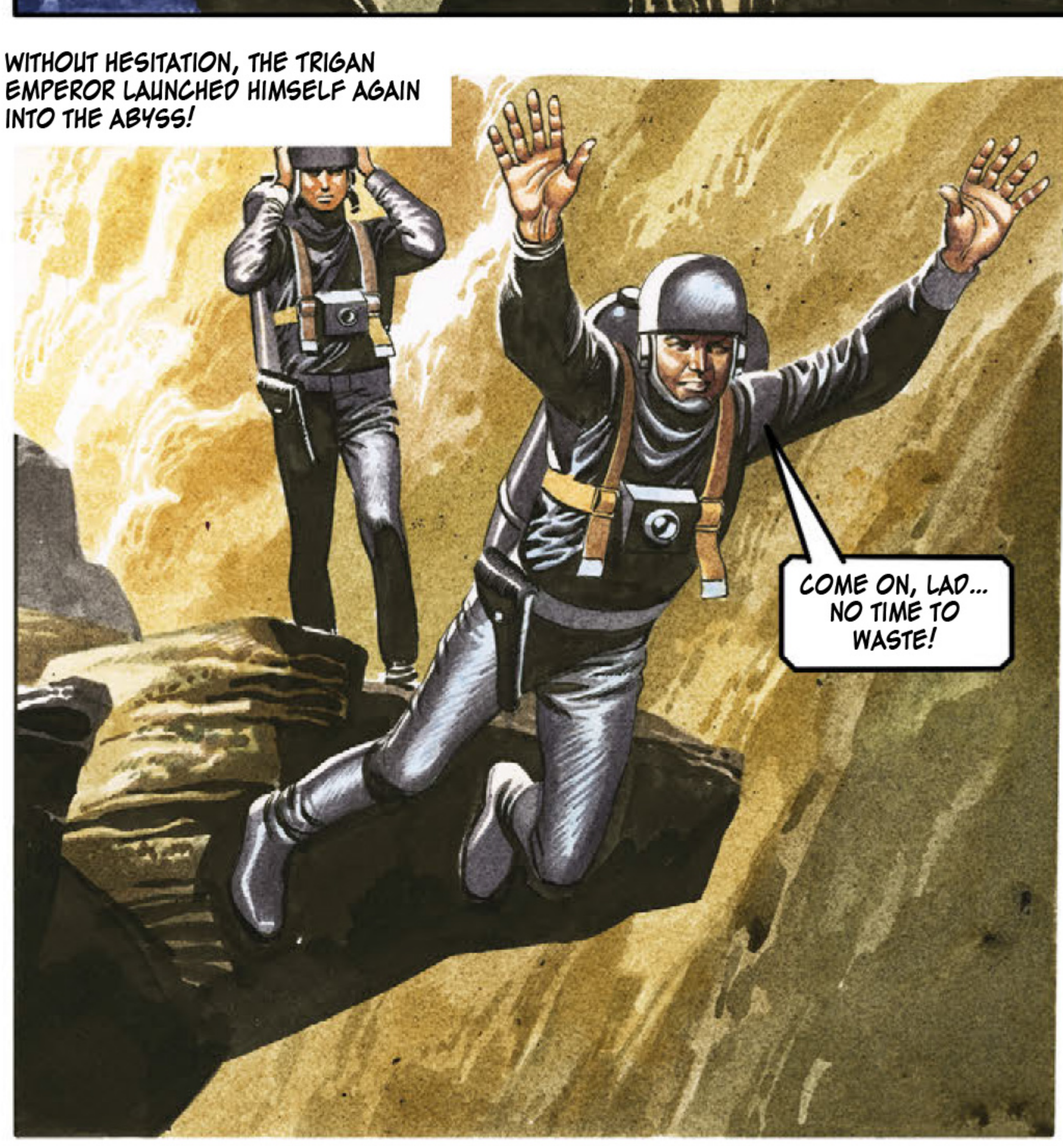

THE PURPLE LIGHT ENVELOPED THE FIVE FLYERS, AND EACH HEARD THE COMMAND...
LOOK INTO THE LIGHT... STARE AT IT AND COME CLOSER!

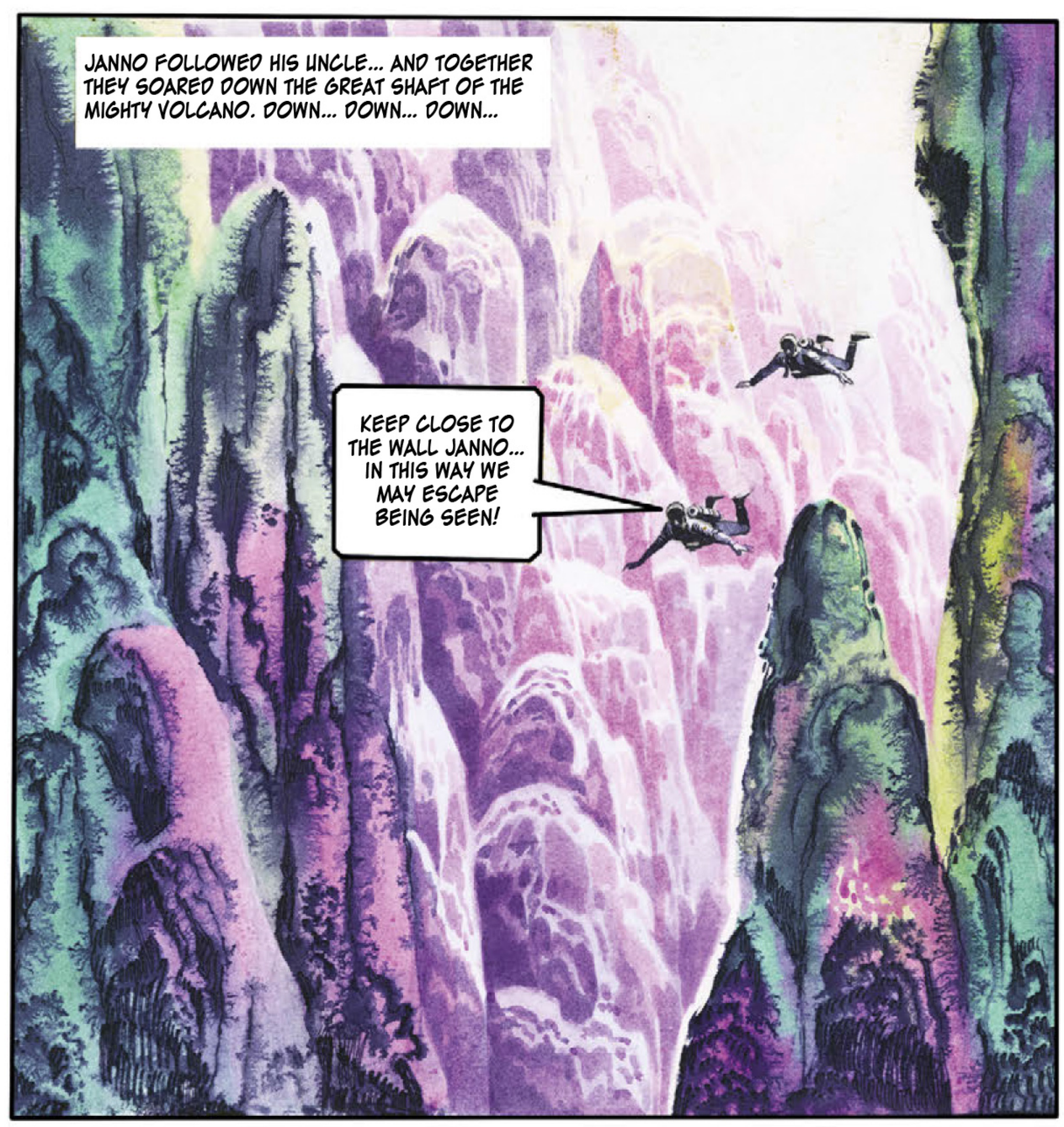
BY A MASSIVE EFFORT OF WILL, JANNO FORCED HIMSELF TO CLOSE HIS EYES... AND INSTANTLY THE VOICE DIED IN HIS EARS!
IT ISN'T CALLING ME ANY MORE... I CAN RESIST IT!

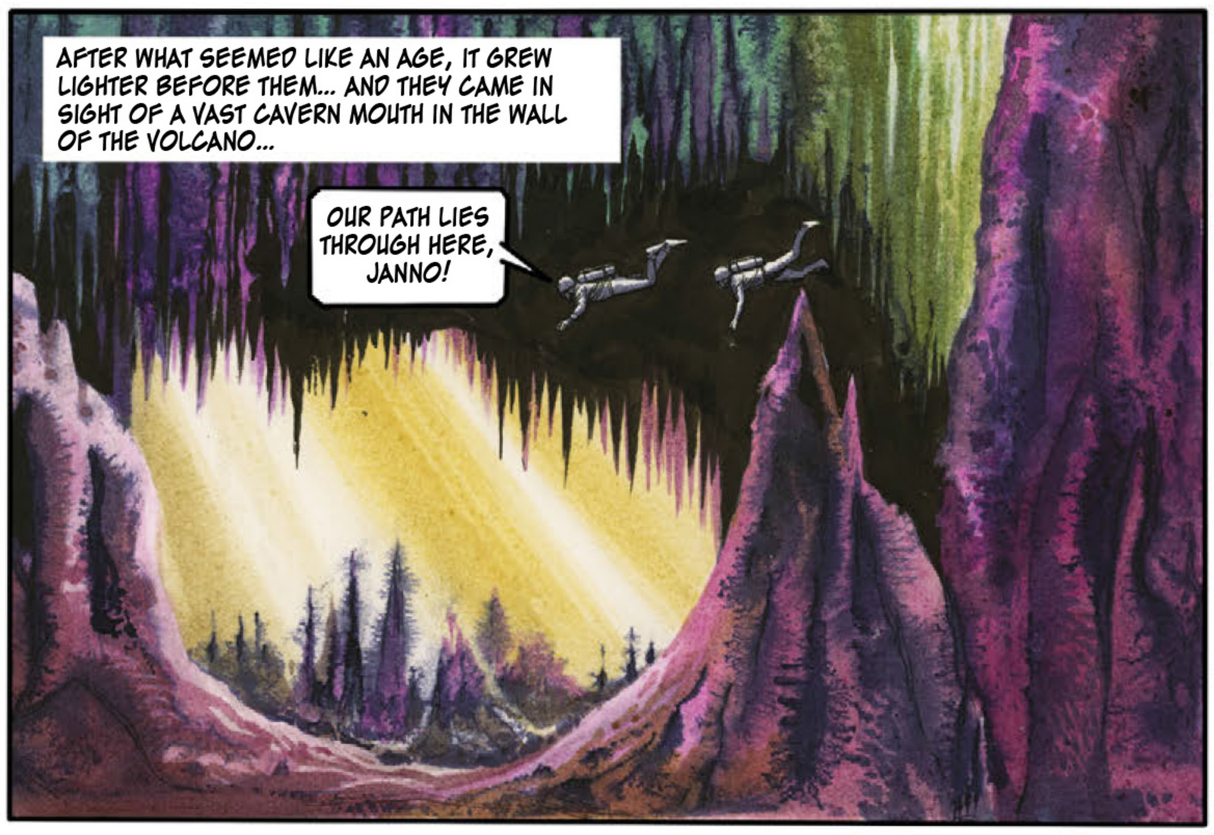
MOMENTS LATER, HE COLLIDED WITH A ROCKY OUTCROP ON THE WALL OF THE CRATER... AND LAY THERE IN A BRUISED HEAP.

WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES AGAIN, THE PURPLE LIGHT NO LONGER BURNED... AND HE WAS NOT ALONE...
UNCLE TRIGO!... YOU...
I ALSO SHUT MY EYES, JANNO... IN THAT WAY WE BOTH STOPPED ITS POWER TO COMMAND US!

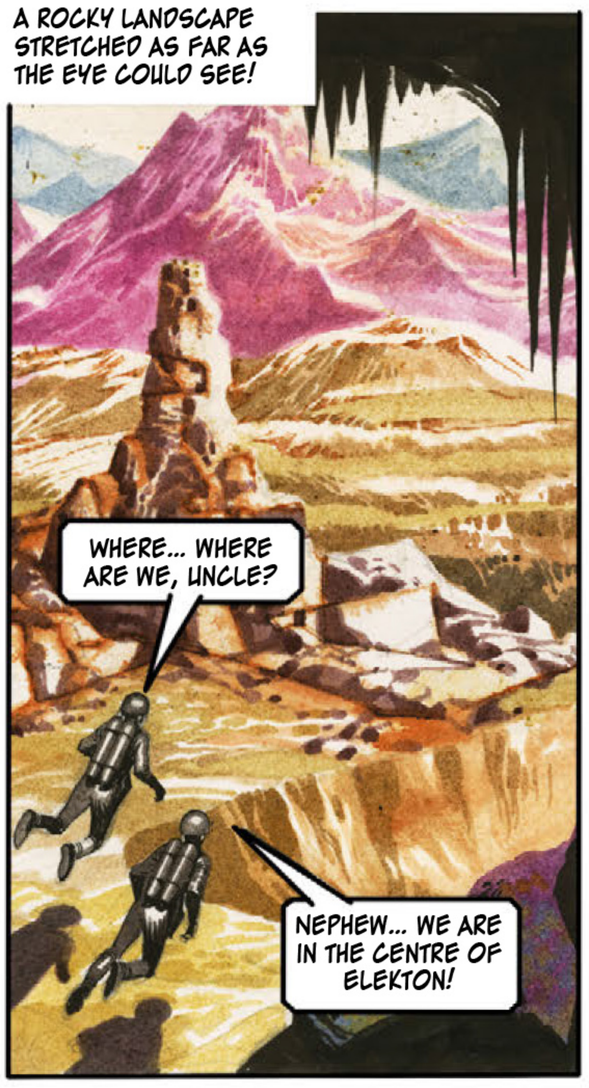
BUT... THE OTHERS? KEREN AND THE TWO OFFICERS?
THEY HAVE GONE WHEREVER THE LIGHT HAS COMMANDED THEM, JANNO!


WITHOUT HESITATION, THE TRIGAN EMPEROR LAUNCHED HIMSELF AGAIN INTO THE ABYSS!
COME ON, LAD... NO TIME TO WASTE!


JANNO FOLLOWED HIS UNCLE... AND TOGETHER THEY SOARED DOWN THE GREAT SHAFT OF THE MIGHTY VOLCANO. DOWN... DOWN... DOWN...
KEEP CLOSE TO THE WALL JANNO... IN THIS WAY WE MAY ESCAPE BEING SEEN!

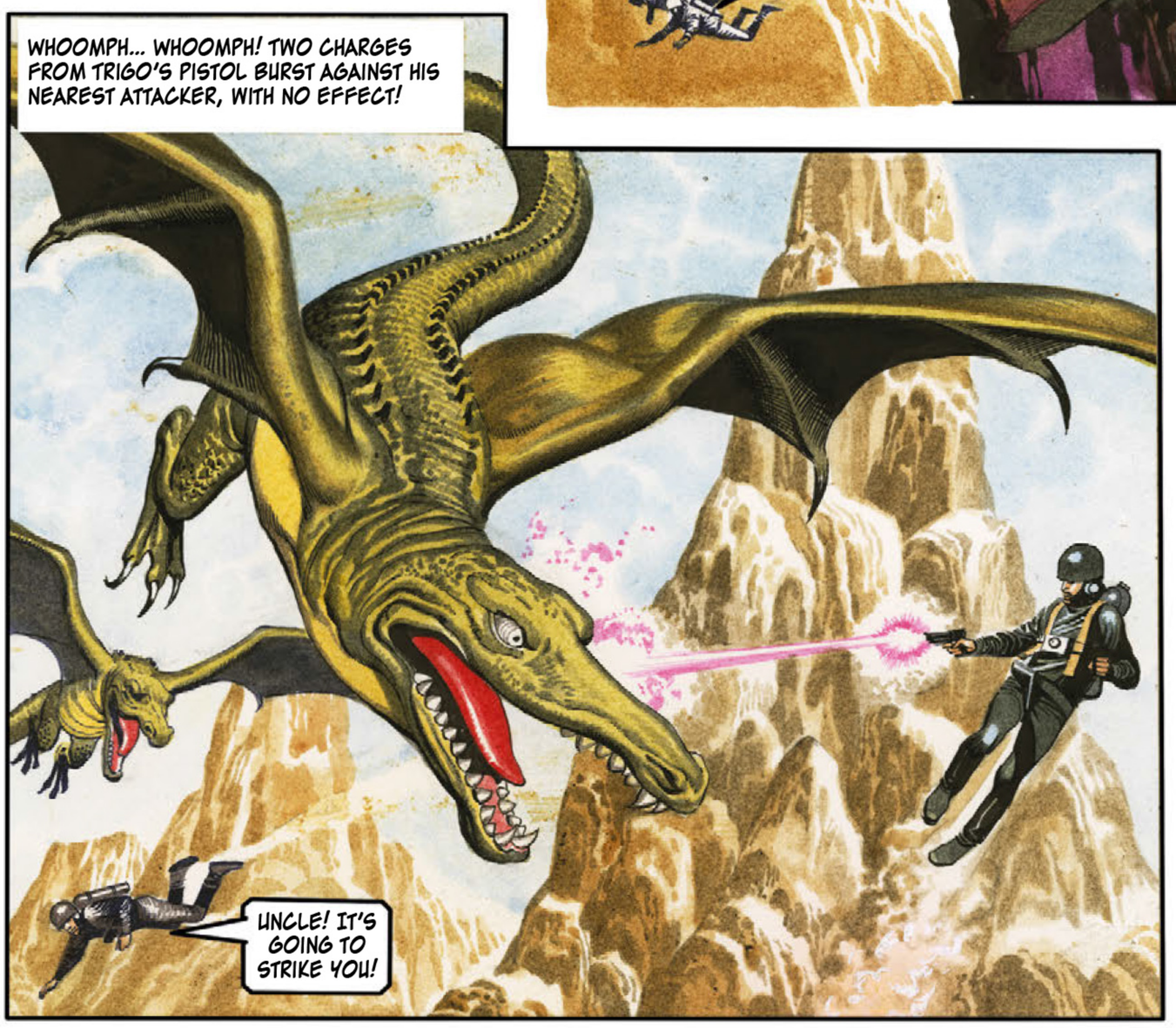

AFTER WHAT SEEMED LIKE AN AGE, IT GREW LIGHTER BEFORE THEM... AND THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF A VAST CAVERN MOUTH IN THE WALL OF THE VOLCANO...
OUR PATH LIES THROUGH HERE, JANNO!

ZOOMING INTO THE HUGE OPENING, THEY STARED IN AWE AT WHAT LAY BEFORE THEM...
IT IS A PLANET WITHIN A PLANET!
BY THE STARS!

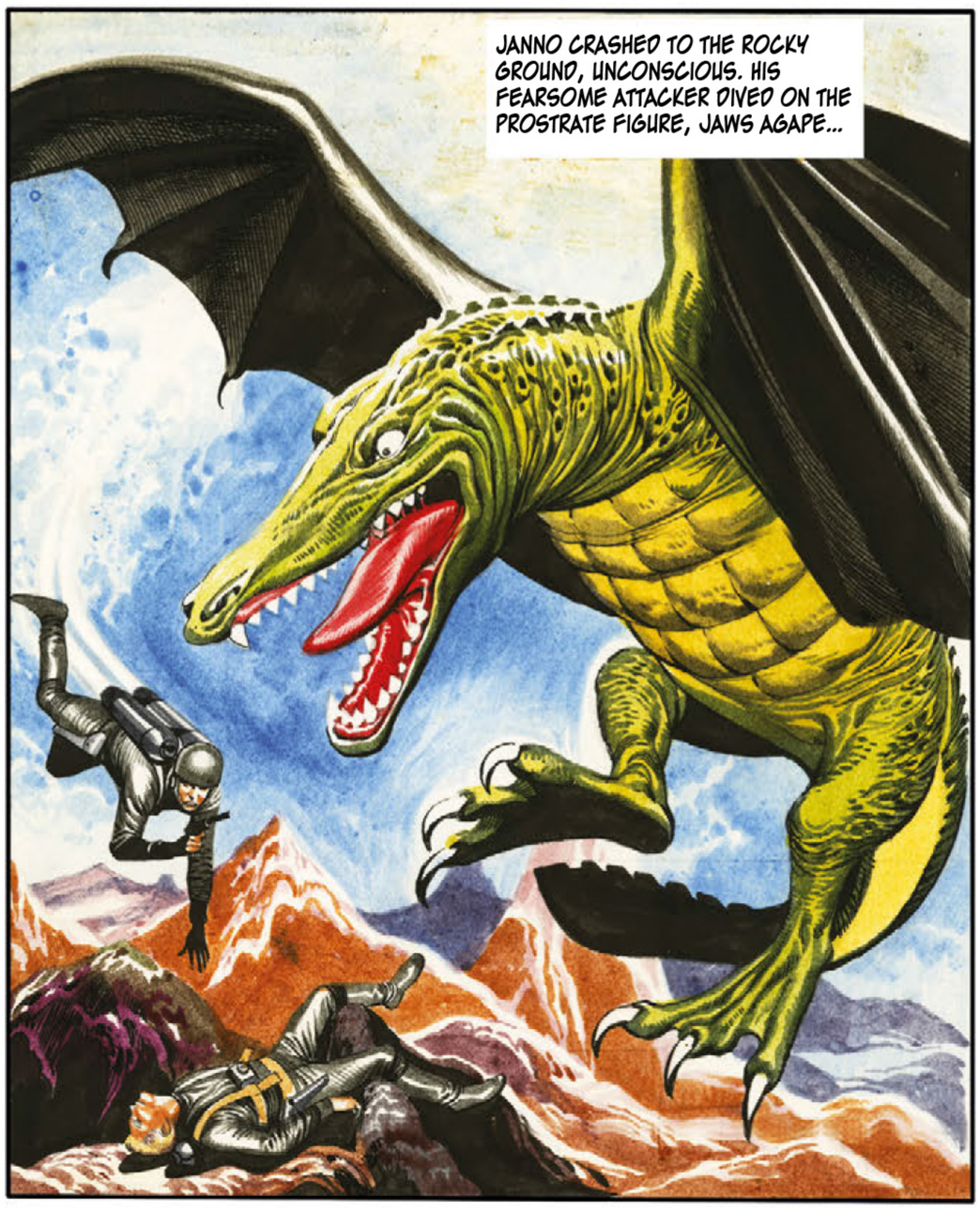

A ROCKY LANDSCAPE STRETCHED AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE!
WHERE... WHERE ARE WE, UNCLE?
NEPHEW... WE ARE IN THE CENTRE OF ELEKTON!

AND THEN...
LOOK OUT!

DIVE, JANNO... DIVE FOR YOUR LIFE!


WHOOMPH... WHOOMPH! TWO CHARGES FROM TRIGO'S PISTOL BURST AGAINST HIS NEAREST ATTACKER, WITH NO EFFECT!
UNCLE! IT'S GOING TO STRIKE YOU!

BUT, THE NEXT INSTANT, A MASSIVE SCALY TAIL CONNECTED WITH JANNO'S HEAD... AND HE KNEW NO MORE!
UUUUUGH!

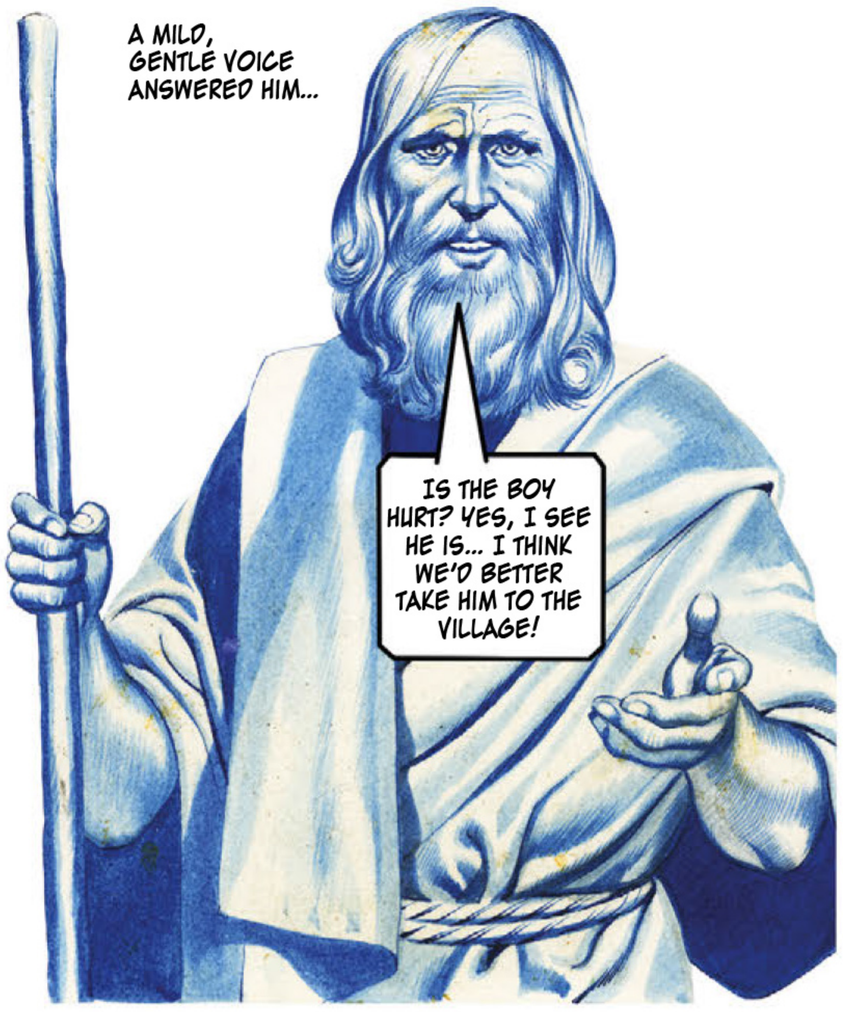

JANNO CRASHED TO THE ROCKY GROUND, UNCONSCIOUS. HIS FEARSOME ATTACKER DIVED ON THE PROSTRATE FIGURE, JAWS AGAPE...

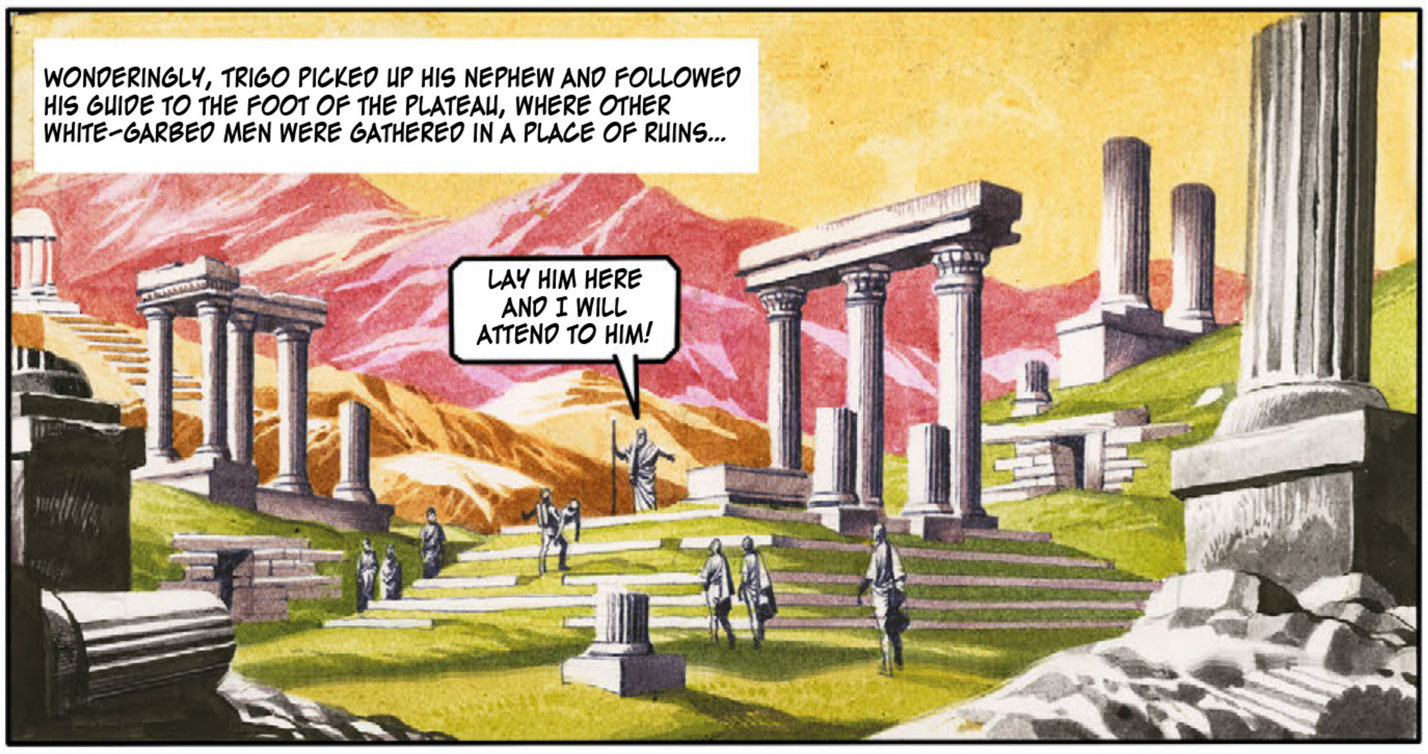
BUT THE MONSTER WAS CHEATED OF ITS PREY! TRIGO SNATCHED HIS NEPHEW FROM THE JAWS OF DESTRUCTION...

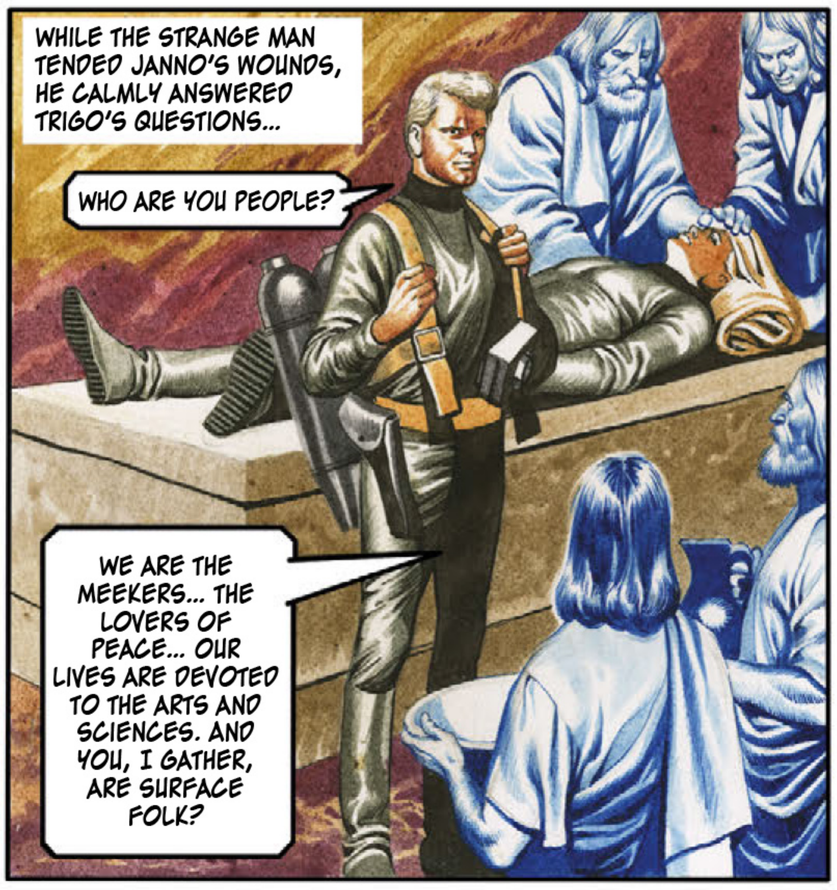
... AND STREAKED AWAY WITH THE TWO FLYING KILLERS AT HIS HEELS!

WHEN THE BEASTS REALISED THAT THEY HAD LOST THEIR QUARRY, THEY ABANDONED THE CHASE... AND TRIGO WAS ABLE TO CONSIDER HIS NEPHEW'S HURTS...
I'M NO PHYSICIAN... BUT I MUST DO WHAT I CAN DO FOR HIM...!

HE LANDED ON A ROCKY PLATEAU TO EXAMINE THE BOY. A FEW MOMENTS LATER, A SHADOW WAS CAST ACROSS HIM...
WHO ARE YOU?
B24


A MILD, GENTLE VOICE ANSWERED HIM...
IS THE BOY HURT? YES, I SEE HE IS... I THINK WE'D BETTER TAKE HIM TO THE VILLAGE!


WONDERINGLY, TRIGO PICKED UP HIS NEPHEW AND FOLLOWED HIS GUIDE TO THE FOOT OF THE PLATEAU, WHERE OTHER WHITE-GARBED MEN WERE GATHERED IN A PLACE OF RUINS...
LAY HIM HERE AND I WILL ATTEND TO HIM!


WHILE THE STRANGE MAN TENDED JANNO'S WOUNDS, HE CALMLY ANSWERED TRIGO'S QUESTIONS...
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?
WE ARE THE MEEKERS... THE LOVERS OF PEACE... OUR LIVES ARE DEVOTED TO THE ARTS AND SCIENCES. AND YOU, I GATHER, ARE SURFACE FOLK?

YOU ARE DOOMED, YOU KNOW. THEY ARE DETERMINED TO DESTROY EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU!
THEY? WHO ARE THEY?

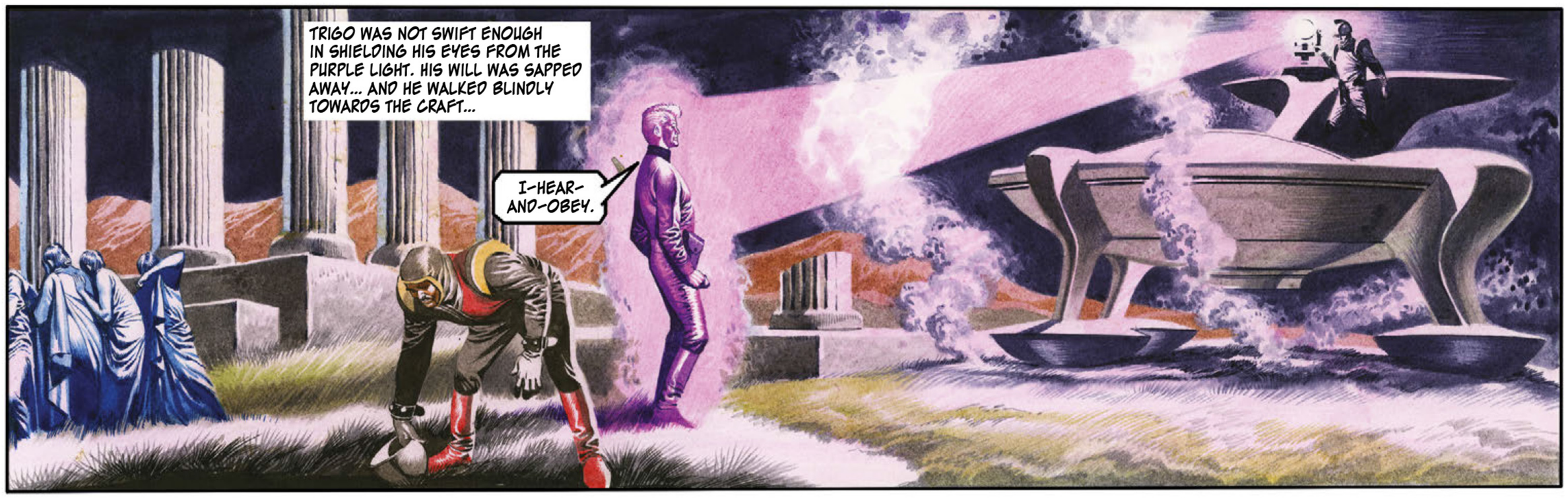
BEFORE THE MEEKER COULD REPLY, THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE ROAR OF A MIGHTY ENGINE, AND THEY COWERED IN ALARM!
QUICKLY... HIDE! AND TAKE THE BOY WITH YOU, OR YOU ARE BOTH AS GOOD AS DEAD!

MOMENTS LATER, A LARGE CRAFT DESCENDED ON A RAM OF FLAME. IT BORE TWO MEN...

THE MEEKERS SHRANK IN ALARM BEFORE THE SCOWLING NEWCOMERS...
WE ARE SEARCHING FOR TWO SURFACE-MEN WHO ESCAPED THE PURPLE LIGHT IN THE VOLCANO SHAFT... HAVE YOU SEEN THEM? SPEAK!

AND THEN TRIGO ACTED!

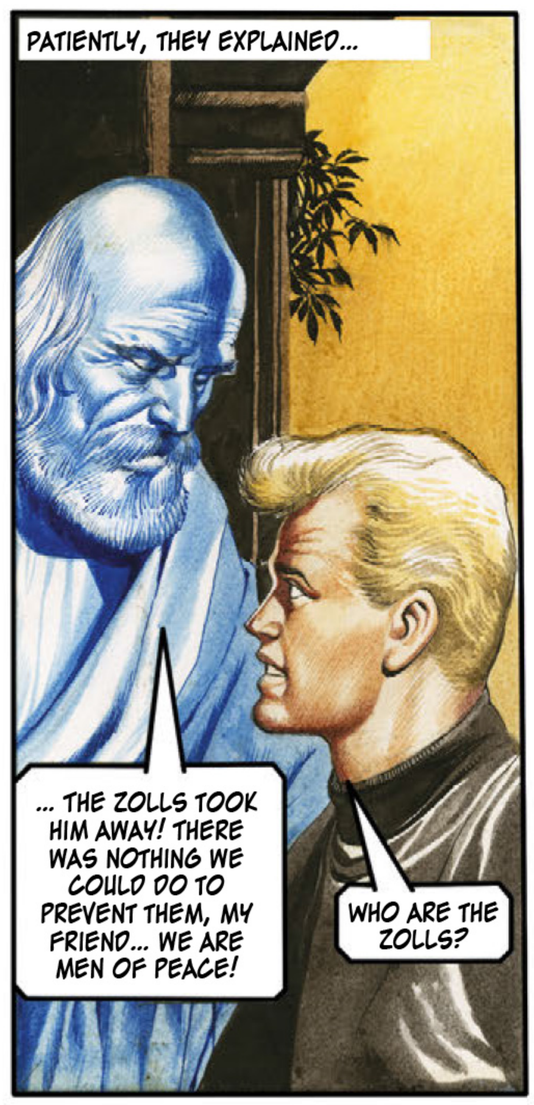
TRIGO CRASHED TO THE GROUND WITH HIS VICTIM, AND BEFORE HE WAS HALF ON HIS FEET AGAIN, THE SECOND MAN HAD LEAPT ON TO THE CRAFT... THE PURPLE LIGHT ENVELOPED HIM!


TRIGO WAS NOT SWIFT ENOUGH IN SHIELDING HIS EYES FROM THE PURPLE LIGHT. HIS WILL WAS SAPPED AWAY... AND HE WALKED BLINDLY TOWARDS THE CRAFT...
I-HEAR-AND-OBEY.

TRIGO CLIMBED ABOARD THE STRANGE CRAFT, AND THE SECOND WARRIOR SNARLED TO THE COWERING MEEKERS...
SO! WE HAVE CAPTURED ONE OF THE SURFACE-MEN... YOU WILL INFORM US IF YOU SEE THE OTHER! UNDERSTOOD?
YES MASTER.

A ROAR OF ENGINES, AND THE CRAFT ASCENDED ON ITS RAM OF LURID FLAME...
IF... IF THEY HAD SEARCHED AND FOUND THAT WE ARE HIDING THE OTHER SURFACE-MAN...
IT DOES NOT BEAR TO BE THOUGHT OF!

SOME TIME LATER, JANNO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AND STARED UP INTO THE GENTLE FACES OF THE MEN IN WHITE...
WHO... WHO ARE YOU... AND WHERE IS MY UNCLE TRIGO?

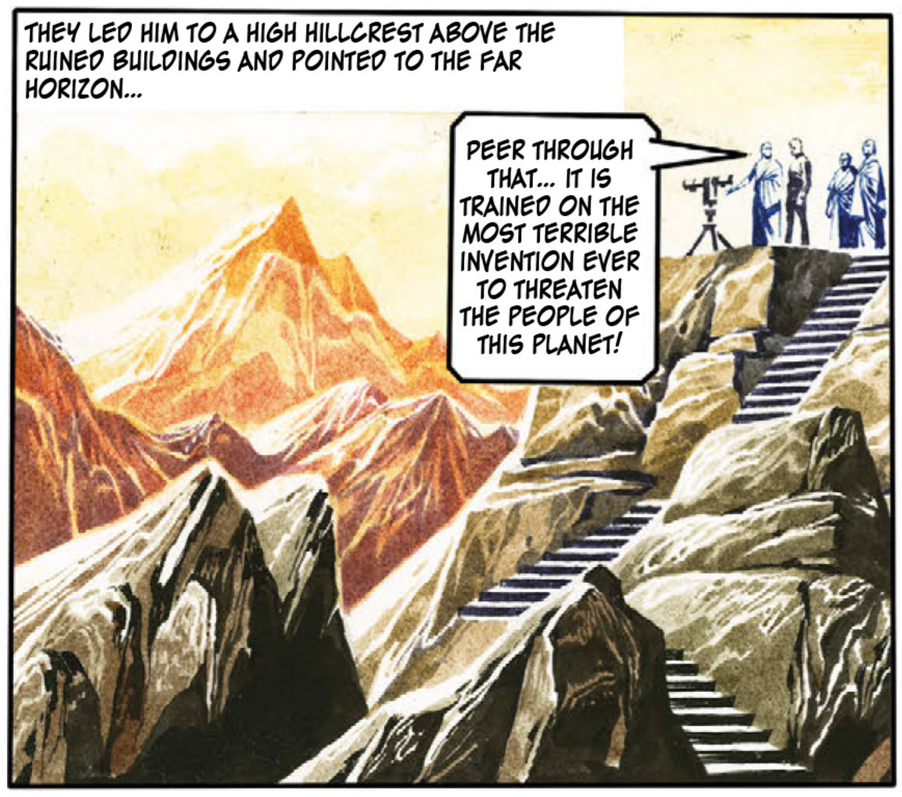

PATIENTLY, THEY EXPLAINED...
... THE ZOLLS TOOK HIM AWAY! THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO TO PREVENT THEM, MY FRIEND... WE ARE MEN OF PEACE!
WHO ARE THE ZOLLS?

LATER, OVER AN EXCELLENT MEAL, THE WAY OF LIFE IN THE HEART OF ELEKTON WAS EXPLAINED TO THE TRIGAN YOUTH...
HERE ARE TWO RACES IN MID-PLANET... THE MEEKERS AND THE ZOLLS. WE ARE MEN OF PEACE AND LEARNING. THE ZOLLS ARE LIKE BRUTISH ANIMALS. IN THE DAYS OF OUR GREATNESS, THE ZOLLS WERE OUR SLAVES, BUT THEY REVOLTED AND CONQUERED US...

NOW THEY JUST PERMIT US TO LIVE... AND IN RETURN WE ARE FORCED TO USE OUR SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE TO DEVISE THEIR FIENDISH WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION!

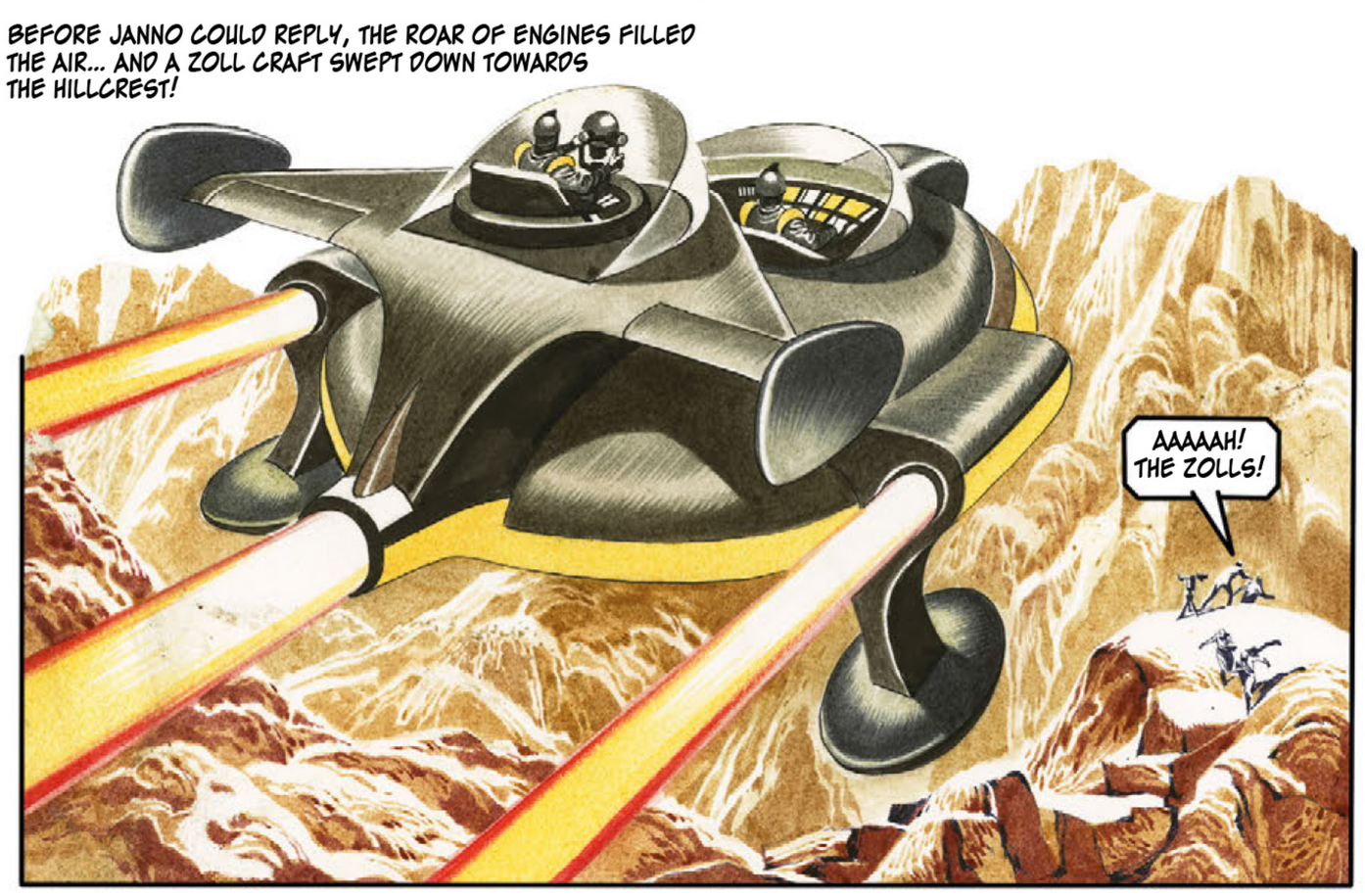
YOU MEAN... WEAPONS LIKE THE PURPLE LIGHT?
YES... THE MIND-COMMANDING LIGHT IS OUR INVENTION, AND TO OUR SHAME, WE HAVE INVENTED WORSE THINGS FOR THOSE BRUTES!

SUCH AS... WHAT?
COME... WE WILL SHOW YOU...


THEY LED HIM TO A HIGH HILLCREST ABOVE THE RUINED BUILDINGS AND POINTED TO THE FAR HORIZON...
PEER THROUGH THAT... IT IS TRAINED ON THE MOST TERRIBLE INVENTION EVER TO THREATEN THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLANET!

JANNO LOOKED AND GAVE A CHOKED CRY OF AMAZEMENT. THE TELESCOPE WAS OF FANTASTIC POWER... IT SHOWED A MASSIVE BUILDING SET AGAINST A VAST, ROCKY WALL... WHERE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE TOILED LIKE INSECTS...

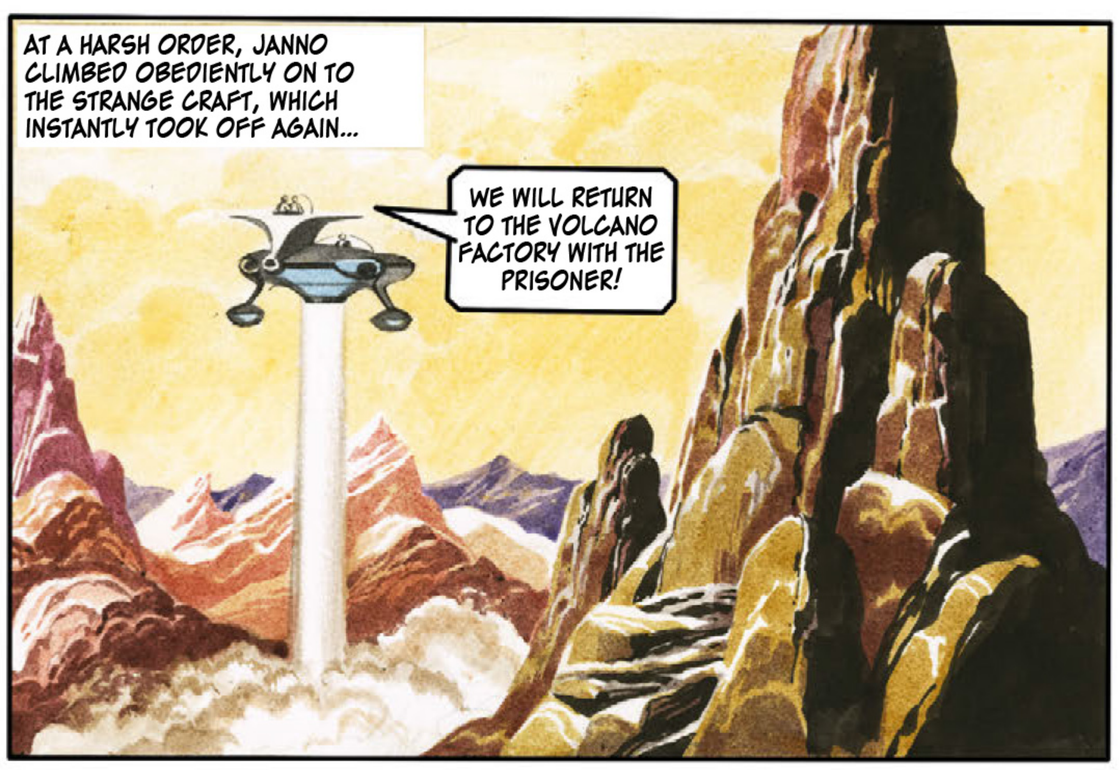
THE YOUNG TRIGAN TURNED TO HIS WHITE-GARBED COMPANIONS...
WHAT... WHAT IS IT?
IT IS A VOLCANO-MAKER! WITH IT, THE ZOLLS WILL CAUSE EVERY VOLCANO ON THE PLANET TO ERUPT... AND DESTROY ALL LIFE ON THE SURFACE!

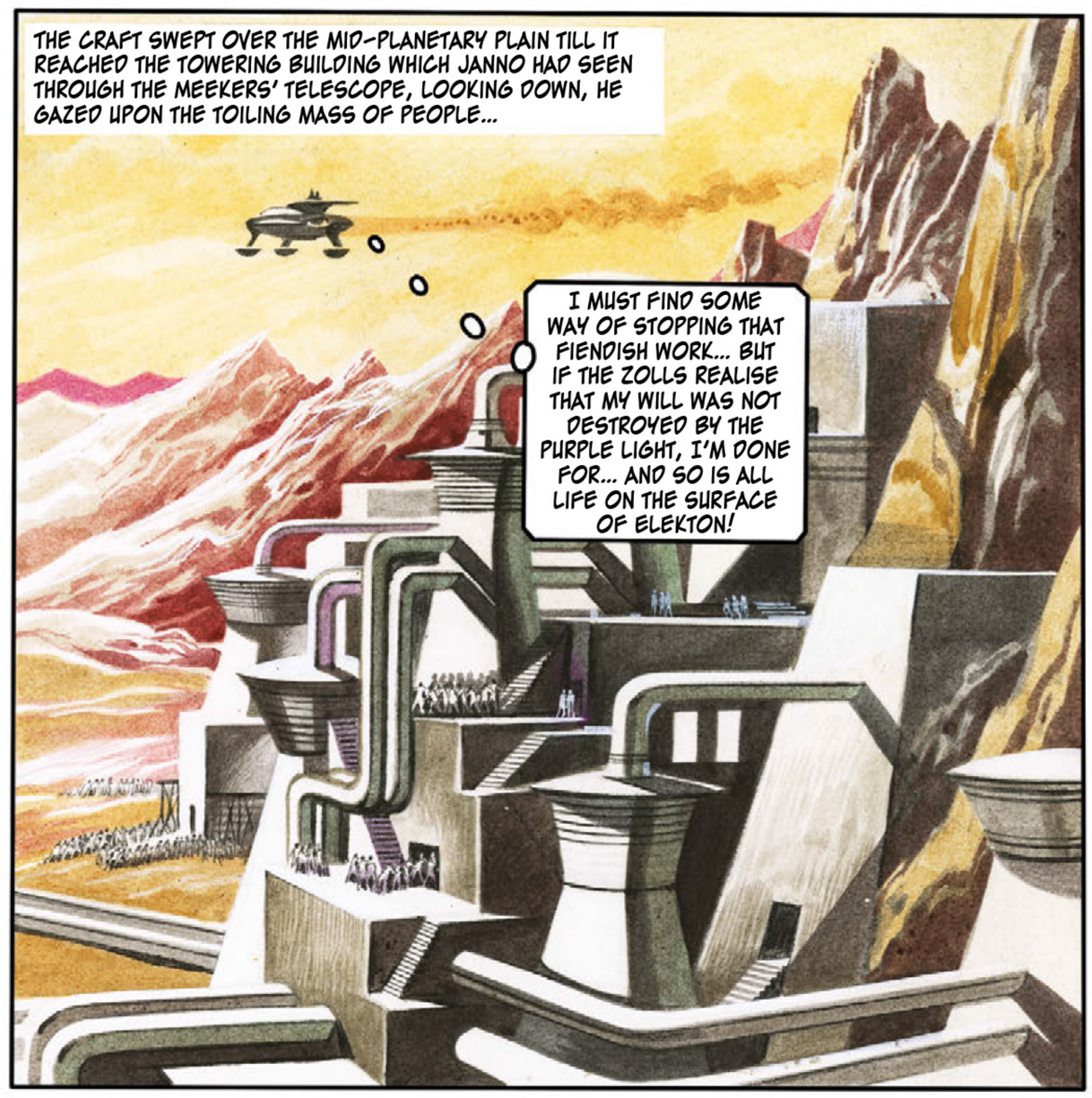

BEFORE JANNO COULD REPLY, THE ROAR OF ENGINES FILLED THE AIR... AND A ZOLL CRAFT SWEPT DOWN TOWARDS THE HILLCREST!
AAAAAH! THE ZOLLS!

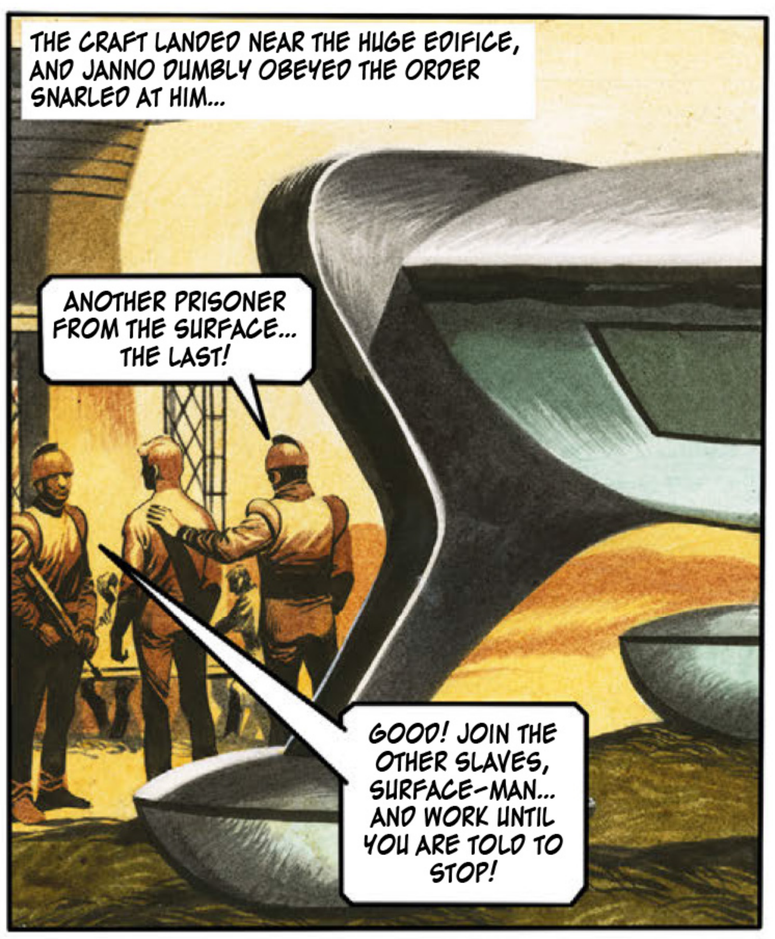
THE MEEKERS RAN... AND JANNO RAN WITH THEM...
I MUST NOT LOOK INTO THE PURPLE LIGHT... OR I'M DONE FOR!

JANNO CLOSED HIS EYES AND TURNING... HE CRIED OUT IN A SING-SONG VOICE...
I-HEAR-AND-I-OBEY-!

THE ZOLLS HAD NOT NOTICED THAT THE YOUNG TRIGAN'S EYES WERE CLOSED; THE PURPLE LIGHT WAS EXTINGUISHED...
HERE IS THE SECOND SURFACE-MAN WHOM WE WERE SEEKING...GOOD!


AT A HARSH ORDER, JANNO CLIMBED OBEDIENTLY ON TO THE STRANGE CRAFT, WHICH INSTANTLY TOOK OFF AGAIN...
WE WILL RETURN TO THE VOLCANO FACTORY WITH THE PRISONER!


THE CRAFT SWEPT OVER THE MID-PLANETARY PLAIN TILL IT REACHED THE TOWERING BUILDING WHICH JANNO HAD SEEN THROUGH THE MEEKERS' TELESCOPE, LOOKING DOWN, HE GAZED UPON THE TOILING MASS OF PEOPLE...
I MUST FIND SOME WAY OF STOPPING THAT FIENDISH WORK... BUT IF THE ZOLLS REALISE THAT MY WILL WAS NOT DESTROYED BY THE PURPLE LIGHT, I'M DONE FOR... AND SO IS ALL LIFE ON THE SURFACE OF ELEKTON!


THE CRAFT LANDED NEAR THE HUGE EDIFICE, AND JANNO DUMBLY OBEYED THE ORDER SNARLED AT HIM...
ANOTHER PRISONER FROM THE SURFACE... THE LAST!
GOOD! JOIN THE OTHER SLAVES, SURFACE-MAN... AND WORK UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO STOP!

WITH A SUDDEN SHOCK, JANNO SAW THE EMPEROR TRIGO LABOURING WITH THE REST...
THESE ARE ALL PEOPLE FROM THE SURFACE... SLAVING TO DESTROY THEIR OWN LOVED ONES THERE... AND, LIKE MY UNCLE, THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING!

JANNO TOOK HIS PLACE BESIDE TRIGO AND BENT HIS BACK TO THE MUSCLE-ACHING WORK. LATER... MUCH LATER... THE ZOLL OVERSEER CALLED A HALT.
NOW YOU WILL REST FOR FOOD!

SCRAPS OF BROKEN MEAT WERE THROWN AT THE SLAVES, WHO FELL UPON THE ROUGH FOOD LIKE ANIMALS. JANNO ATE... AND LISTENED TO A CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO OF HIS CAPTORS...
WHEN THEY'VE FINISHED EATING THEY WILL RECEIVE THEIR DAILY DOSE OF THE PURPLE LIGHT!

WHEN DO WE START THE VOLCANOES?
IN A FEW HOURS... AS SOON AS THIS WALL IS COMPLETED!

THINK OF IT... THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF VOLCANOES ON THE SURFACE. IN A FEW HOURS FROM NOW, THE GROUND WILL OPEN UP AND SWALLOW WHOLE CITIES! THEN WE SHALL BE MASTERS OF THE ENTIRE PLANET!

JANNO WAITED TO HEAR NO MORE... HE ROSE TO HIS FEET AND POISED HIMSELF FOR ACTION...,
THIS MAY BE MY LAST CHANCE... AND THE LAST CHANCE FOR ELEKTON!

HE LEAPT!
AAAAAAGH!

PISTOL IN HAND, HE RACED UP A TOWERING FLIGHT OF STEPS... FIRING AS HE WENT!
ALARM! ALARM! SLAVE ESCAPING!

THEN... HIS WAY WAS BARRED!
THERE HE IS! SHOOT HIM DOWN!
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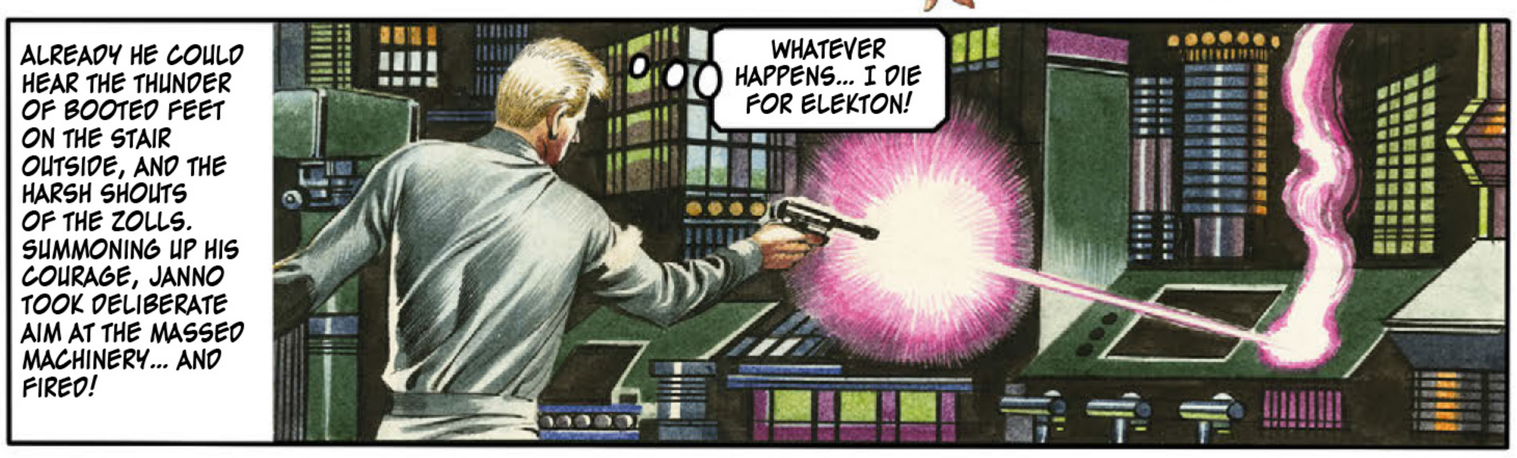
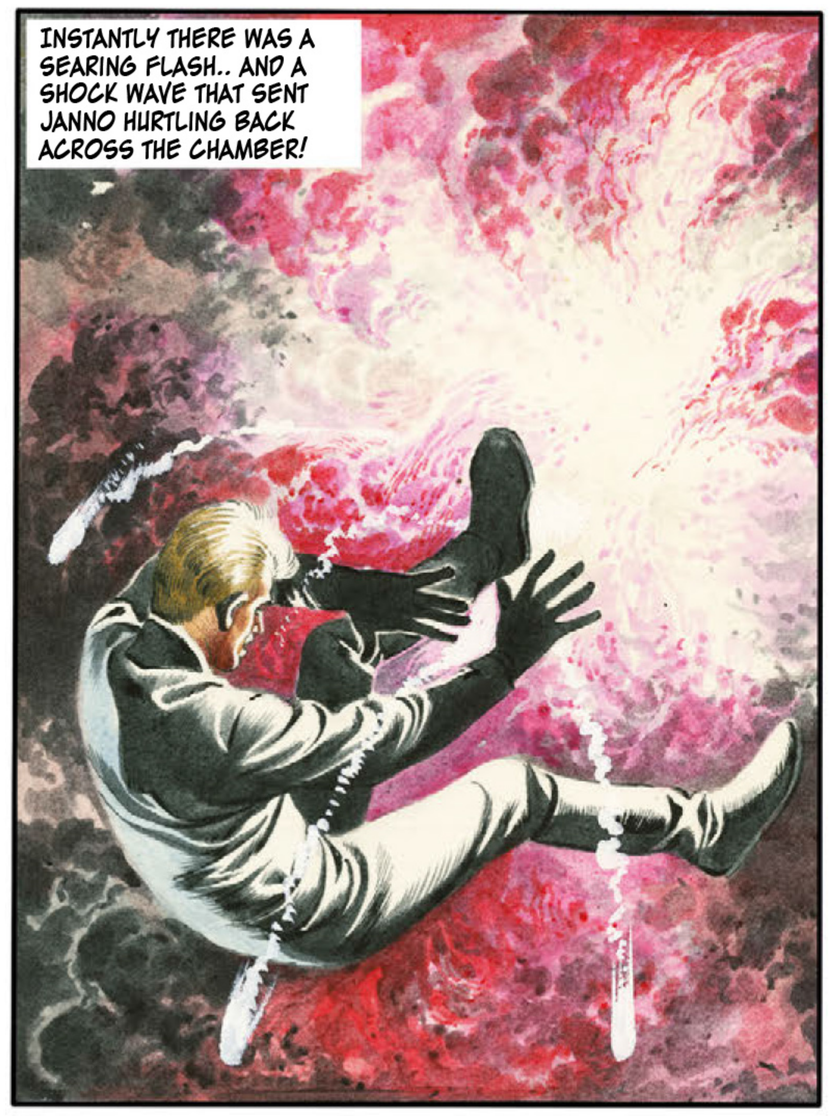
JANNO DUCKED, AND FIRED HIS PISTOL... WHILE A PROJECTILE SMASHED INTO THE WALL JUST ABOVE HIS HEAD!

TWO MORE SWIFT SHOTS SETTLED FOR HIS OTHER OPPONENTS... HE RACED ON UP THE STEPS...
A DOOR!

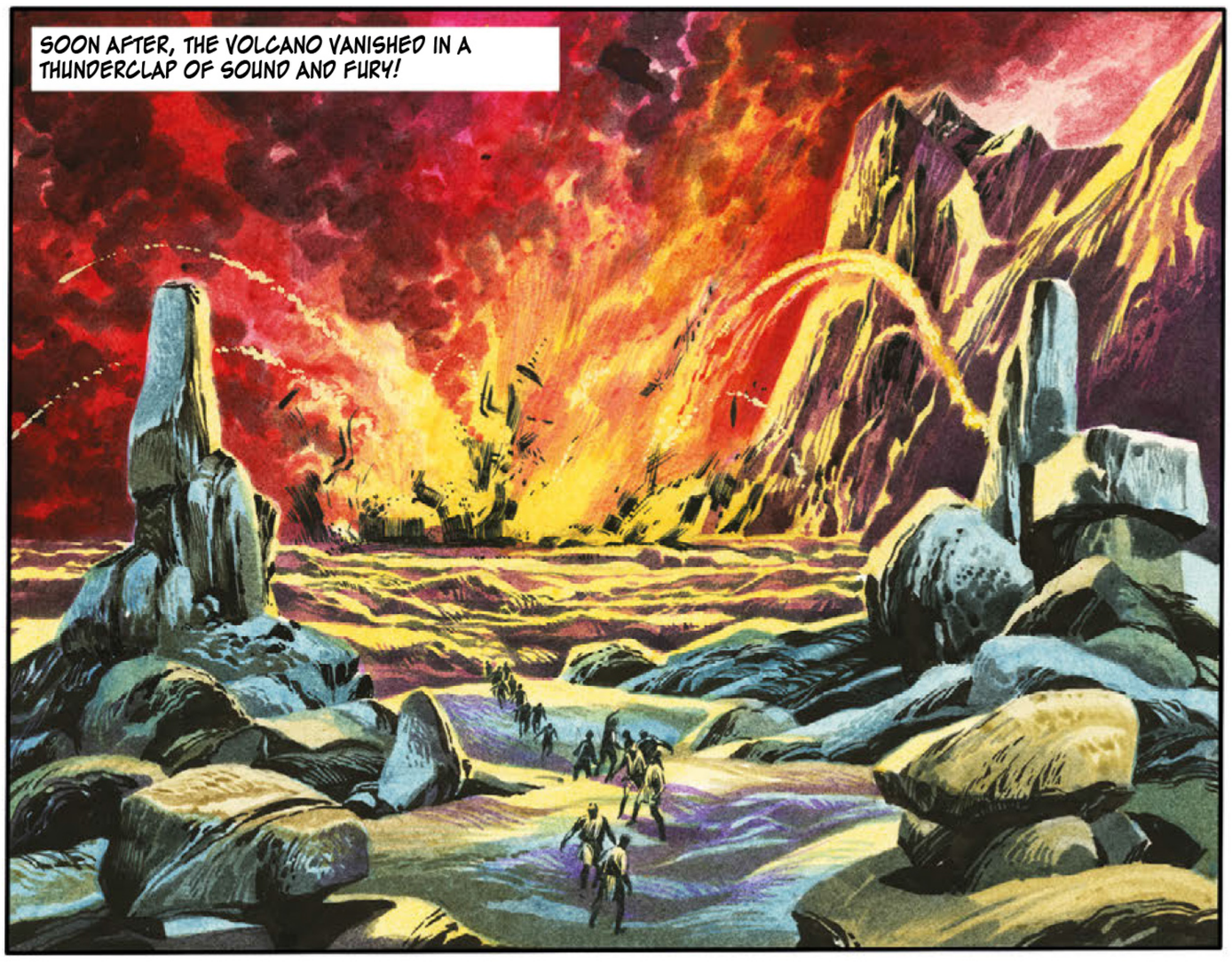
THE DOOR LED INTO A VAST CHAMBER PACKED WITH MACHINERY... JANNO LOOKED ABOUT HIM IN AWE...
THIS MUST BE THE VERY NERVE CENTRE OF THE VOLCANO FACTORY!


ALREADY HE COULD HEAR THE THUNDER OF BOOTED FEET ON THE STAIR OUTSIDE, AND THE HARSH SHOUTS OF THE ZOLLS. SUMMONING UP HIS COURAGE, JANNO TOOK DELIBERATE AIM AT THE MASSED MACHINERY... AND FIRED!
WHATEVER HAPPENS... I DIE FOR ELEKTON!


INSTANTLY THERE WAS A SEARING FLASH.. AND A SHOCK WAVE THAT SENT JANNO HURTLING BACK ACROSS THE CHAMBER!

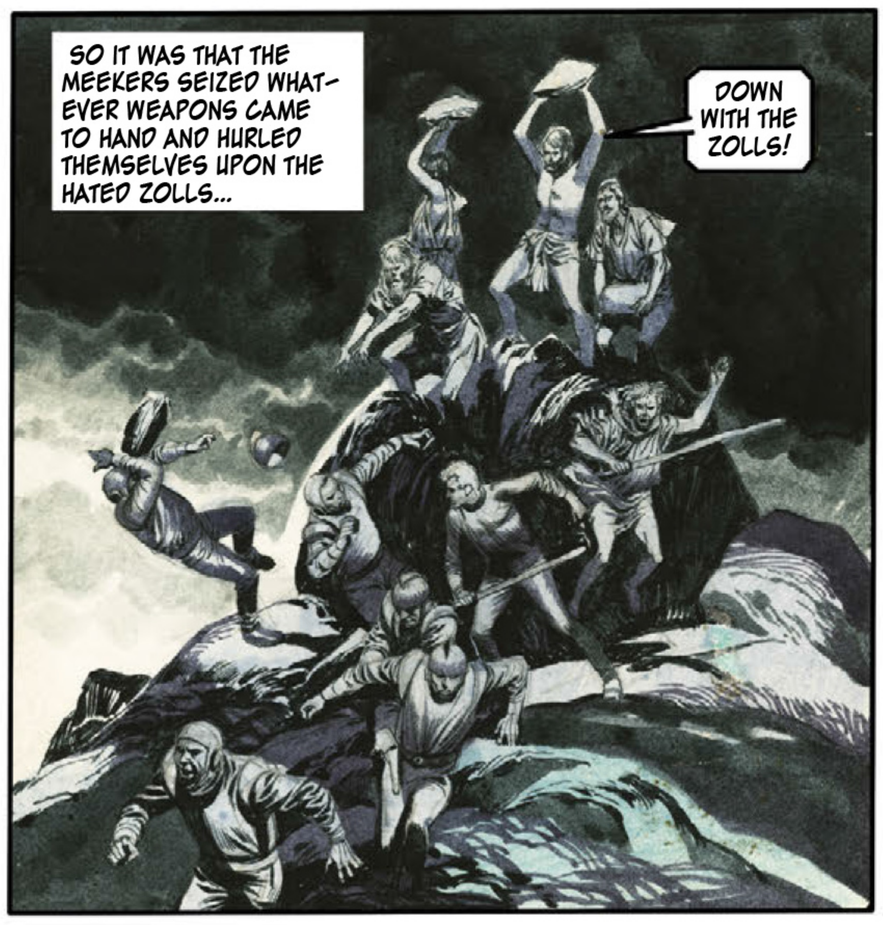
HE PICKED HIMSELF UP, HALF-DAZED... AND DRAGGED HIMSELF OUT ON TO THE STAIR JUST AS THE FIRST OF THE MIGHTY EXPLOSIONS BEGAN TO TEAR THE FIENDISH VOLCANO FACTORY APART!
I HAVE STARTED A CHAIN REACTION OF DESTRUCTION!

REACHING THE GROUND, HE FOUND THE SLAVES STANDING LIKE DUMB ANIMALS AMIDST THE HOLOCAUST... BUT WHEN HE CALLED, THEY OBEDIENTLY FOLLOWED HIM...
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! THE WHOLE PLACE IS GOING UP!


SOON AFTER, THE VOLCANO VANISHED IN A THUNDERCLAP OF SOUND AND FURY!

SOME DISTANCE FROM THE SCENE OF DESTRUCTION, JANNO MET HIS FRIENDS THE MEEKERS...
BUT... WHERE ARE THE ZOLLS?
THEY'RE FLEEING IN PANIC ALL OVER THE PLAIN! WITH YOUR HELP I COULD HUNT THEM DOWN AND DESTROY THEIR POWER FOREVER!

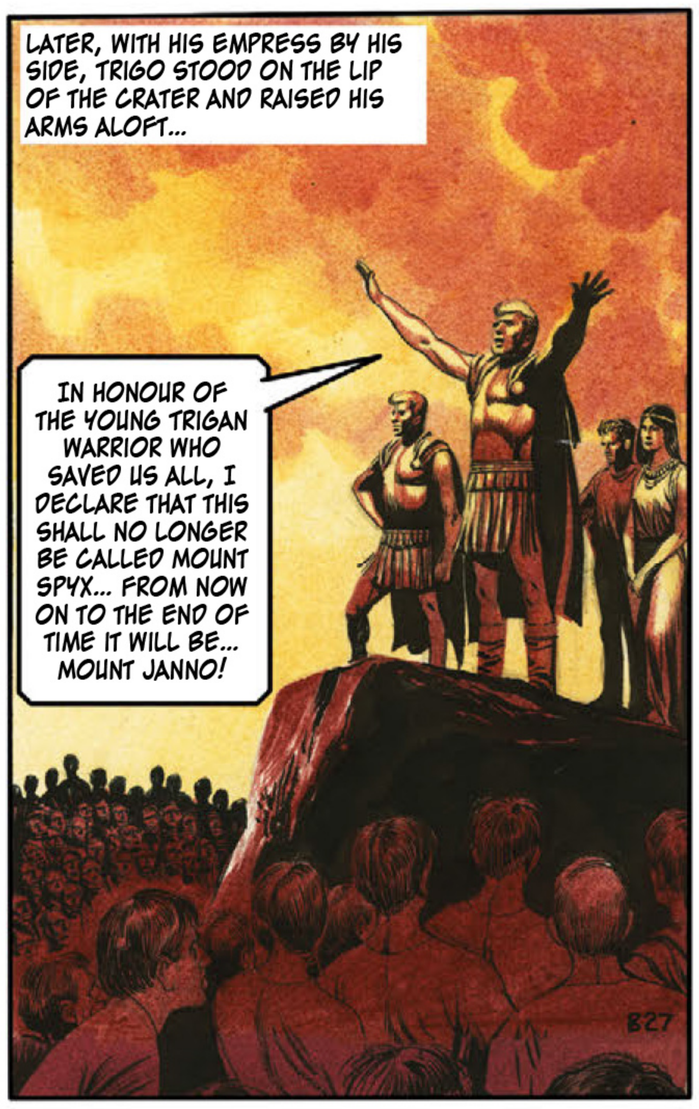
YOU MEAN... FIGHT? US?
WE ARE PEACE-LOVING PEOPLE!
IT'S THE LAST CHANCE YOU'LL HAVE! STRIKE NOW... OR REMAIN THEIR SLAVES FOREVER!


SO IT WAS THAT THE MEEKERS SEIZED WHATEVER WEAPONS CAME TO HAND AND HURLED THEMSELVES UPON THE HATED ZOLLS...
DOWN WITH THE ZOLLS!

SOON IT WAS ALL OVER, THE LEADERS WHO HAD RULED THE HEART OF ELEKTON WERE SMASHED, AND THEIR EVIL PLANS BROUGHT TO NOTHING!
WE THANK YOU, JANNO! NOT ONLY HAVE YOU SAVED YOUR OWN PEOPLE ON THE SURFACE, BUT YOU HAVE BROUGHT PEACE TO THE MID-PLANET!

ONE THING WORRIED THE YOUNG TRIGAN... BUT THAT FEAR WAS SOON REMOVED...
BUT THESE PEOPLE... THE SLAVES... THE EMPEROR TRIGO AMONGST THEM... THEIR WILLS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY THE PURPLE LIGHT!
THE EFFECT OF THE PURPLE LIGHT LASTS ONLY A SHORT WHILE, WHICH IS WHY THE ZOLLS SUBJECTED THE SLAVES TO THE LIGHT EVERY DAY. TOMORROW, MY FRIEND, THEY WILL BE THEMSELVES AGAIN!

SO ENDED THE SAGA OF THE PURPLE LIGHT. NEXT DAY BEGAN THE TASK OF TRANSPORTING THE FREED SLAVES BACK TO THE SURFACE AGAIN. THEY EMERGED IN THE SAME WAY THEY HAD DESCENDED... IN A ZOLL CRAFT FROM THE CRATER OF MOUNT SPYX...


LATER, WITH HIS EMPRESS BY HIS SIDE, TRIGO STOOD ON THE LIP OF THE CRATER AND RAISED HIS ARMS ALOFT...
IN HONOUR OF THE YOUNG TRIGAN WARRIOR WHO SAVED US ALL, I DECLARE THAT THIS SHALL NO LONGER BE CALLED MOUNT SPYX... FROM NOW ON TO THE END OF TIME IT WILL BE... MOUNT JANNO!
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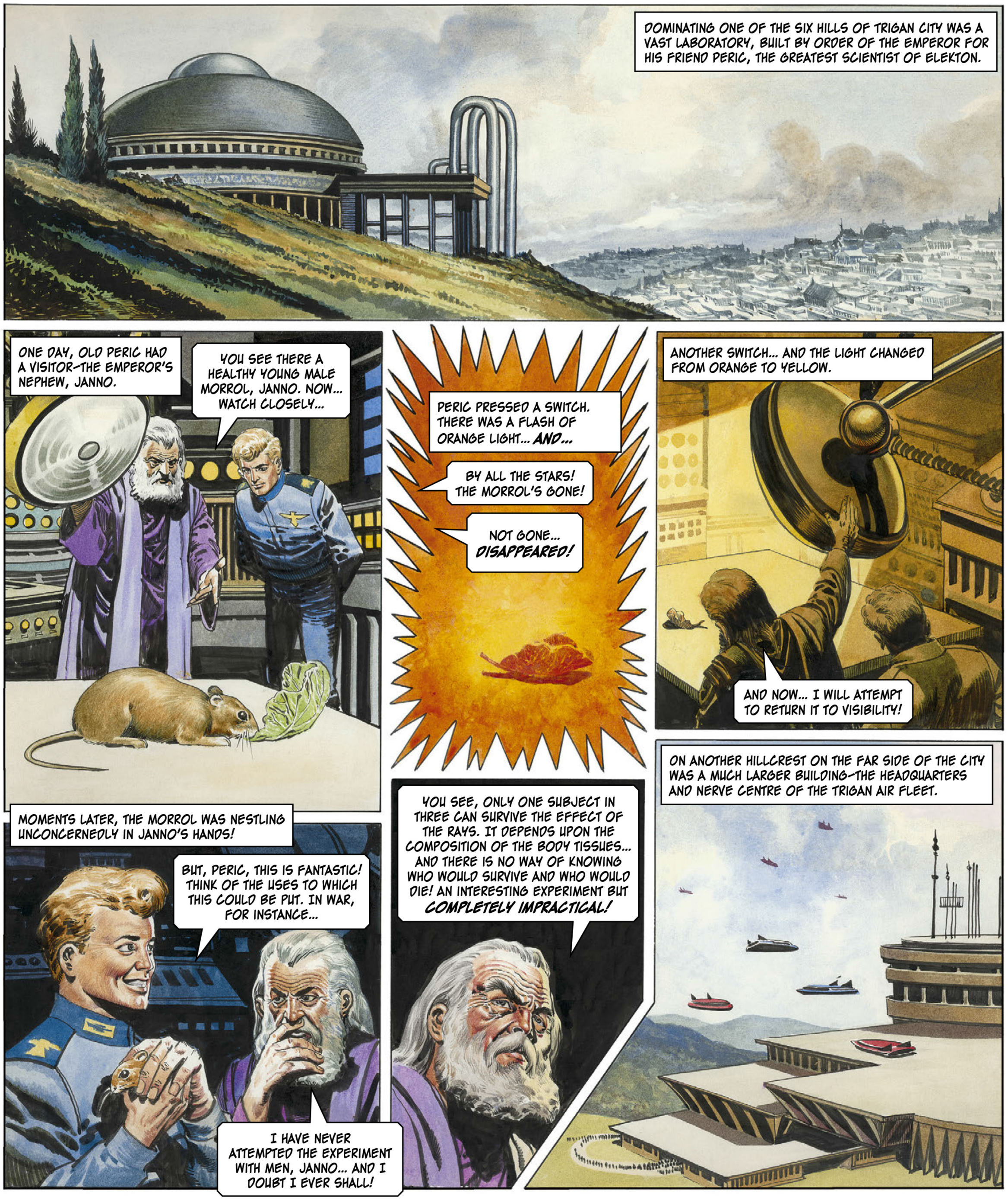
XVIII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE INVISIBILITY RAY

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 391-397

12th July – 23rd August 1969


DOMINATING ONE OF THE SIX HILLS OF TRIGAN CITY WAS A VAST LABORATORY, BUILT BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR FOR HIS FRIEND PERIC, THE GREATEST SCIENTIST OF ELEKTON.
ONE DAY, OLD PERIC HAD A VISITOR—THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, JANNO.
YOU SEE THERE A HEALTHY YOUNG MALE MORROL, JANNO. NOW... WATCH CLOSELY...
PERIC PRESSED A SWITCH. THERE WAS A FLASH OF ORANGE LIGHT... AND...
BY ALL THE STARS! THE MORROL'S GONE!
NOT GONE... DISAPPEARED!
ANOTHER SWITCH... AND THE LIGHT CHANGED FROM ORANGE TO YELLOW.
AND NOW... I WILL ATTEMPT TO RETURN IT TO VISIBILITY!
MOMENTS LATER, THE MORROL WAS NESTLING UNCONCERNEDLY IN JANNO'S HANDS!
BUT, PERIC, THIS IS FANTASTIC! THINK OF THE USES TO WHICH THIS COULD BE PUT. IN WAR, FOR INSTANCE...
I HAVE NEVER ATTEMPTED THE EXPERIMENT WITH MEN, JANNO... AND I DOUBT I EVER SHALL!
YOU SEE, ONLY ONE SUBJECT IN THREE CAN SURVIVE THE EFFECT OF THE RAYS. IT DEPENDS UPON THE COMPOSITION OF THE BODY TISSUES... AND THERE IS NO WAY OF KNOWING WHO WOULD SURVIVE AND WHO WOULD DIE! AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT BUT COMPLETELY IMPRACTICAL!
ON ANOTHER HILLCREST ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE CITY WAS A MUCH LARGER BUILDING—THE HEADQUARTERS AND NERVE CENTRE OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET.

IN AN ARMOURED CHAMBER BENEATH THE BUILDING, NEMON, THE KEEPER OF THE SECRET ARCHIVES OF THE FLEET, SAW A RED LIGHT FLASH ON HIS DESK.

A PROPERLY-AUTHORISED OFFICER IS REQUESTING ADMISSION.

NEMON PRESSED THE LEVER TO OPEN THE DOOR. ***BUT WHEN IT OPENED...***

AAAAH! WHO ARE YOU?

NEMON GROPED FOR HIS PISTOL... TOO LATE!

THE HOODED INTRUDER FIRED HIS GUN...

A GLOVED HAND REMOVED A CERTAIN FILE FROM THE ARCHIVES.

THAT NIGHT, JANNO WAS RUDELY AWAKENED FROM HIS BED BY ARMED TROOPERS OF THE IMPERIAL POLICE!

WHAT IS IT...? WHAT'S THE MATTER?

YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!

HE WAS TAKEN TO HEADQUARTERS... BEFORE VANASS, THE COLONEL OF THE IMPERIAL POLICE.

NOW SEE HERE, VANASS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT–

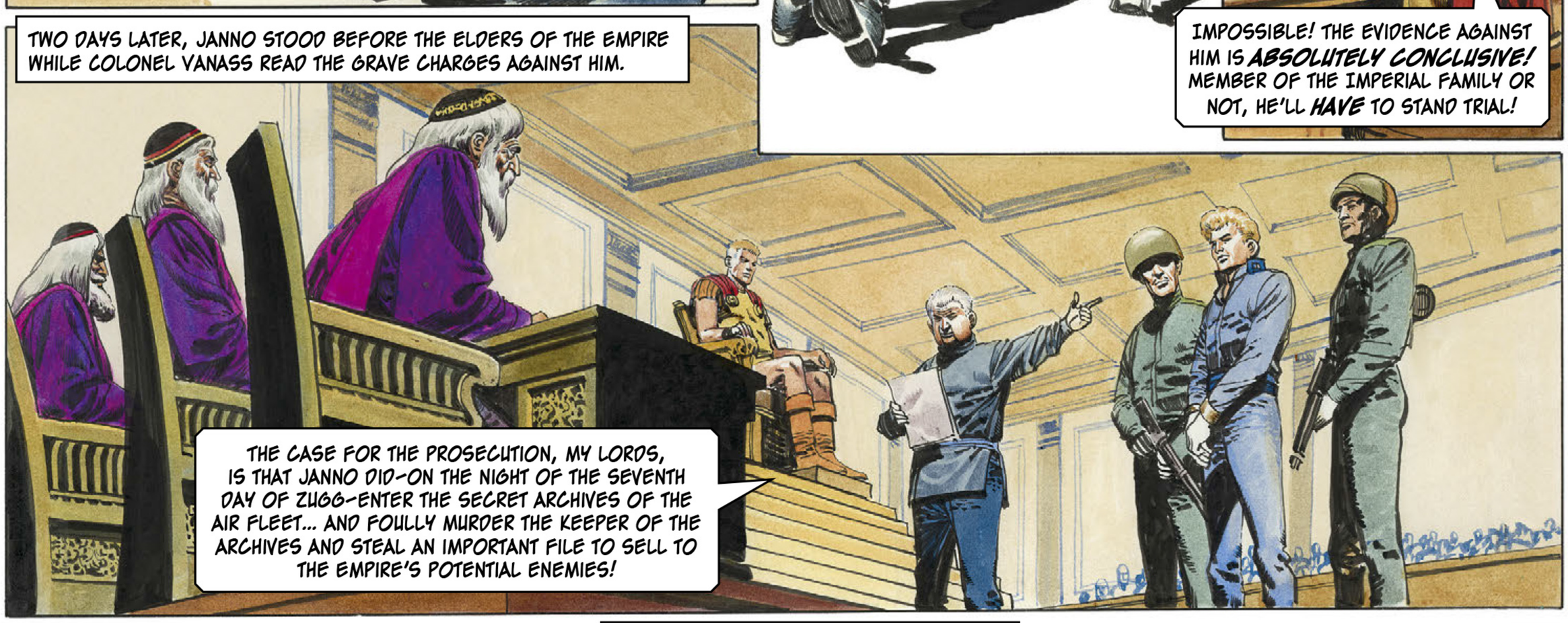
SILENCE!

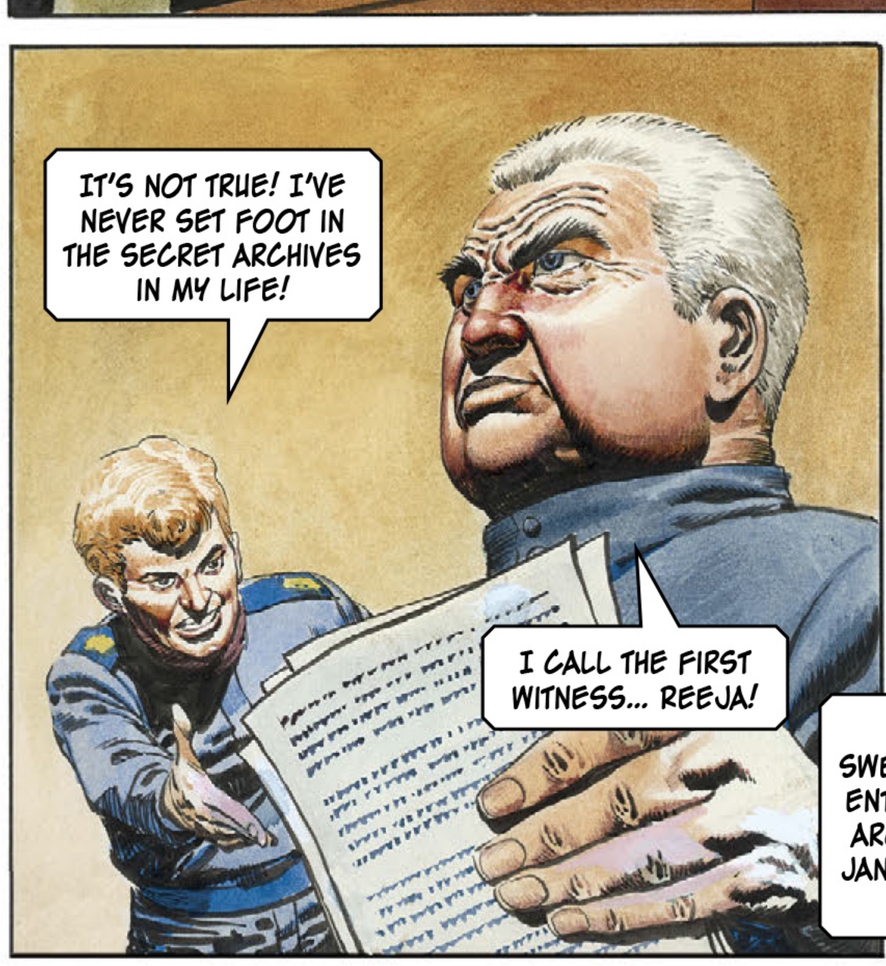
YOU ARE CHARGED WITH MURDER AND HIGH TREASON AGAINST THE EMPIRE! AND THE FACT THAT YOU'RE THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW IS ***NOT*** GOING TO SAVE YOU, YOU CUR!

JANNO'S VOICE ROSE WILDLY IN PROTEST... BUT THE COLONEL OF THE IMPERIAL POLICE MADE A BRUSQUE GESTURE TO THE TROOPERS.
I'M INNOCENT, I TELL YOU... INNOCENT!
YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITY TO TELL LIES AT YOUR TRIAL, YOU YOUNG SAVAGE! TAKE HIM AWAY!

HE WAS DRAGGED AWAY, STILL PROTESTING...
LET GO OF ME! I'VE DONE NOTHING!

A REPORT ON HIS NEPHEW'S ARREST WAS TAKEN TO THE EMPEROR FIRST THING NEXT MORNING. HE SENT FOR HIS BROTHER BRAG, WHO WAS JANNO'S FATHER.
TRIGO! YOU CAN'T BELIEVE THIS OF THE LAD! SURELY YOU'LL QUASH THE CHARGE IMMEDIATELY!
IMPOSSIBLE! THE EVIDENCE AGAINST HIM IS ABSOLUTELY CONCLUSIVE! MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY OR NOT, HE'LL HAVE TO STAND TRIAL!


TWO DAYS LATER, JANNO STOOD BEFORE THE ELDERS OF THE EMPIRE WHILE COLONEL VANASS READ THE GRAVE CHARGES AGAINST HIM.
THE CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION, MY LORDS, IS THAT JANNO DID-ON THE NIGHT OF THE SEVENTH DAY OF ZUGG-ENTER THE SECRET ARCHIVES OF THE AIR FLEET... AND FOULLY MURDER THE KEEPER OF THE ARCHIVES AND STEAL AN IMPORTANT FILE TO SELL TO THE EMPIRE'S POTENTIAL ENEMIES!


IT'S NOT TRUE! I'VE NEVER SET FOOT IN THE SECRET ARCHIVES IN MY LIFE!
I CALL THE FIRST WITNESS... REEJA!

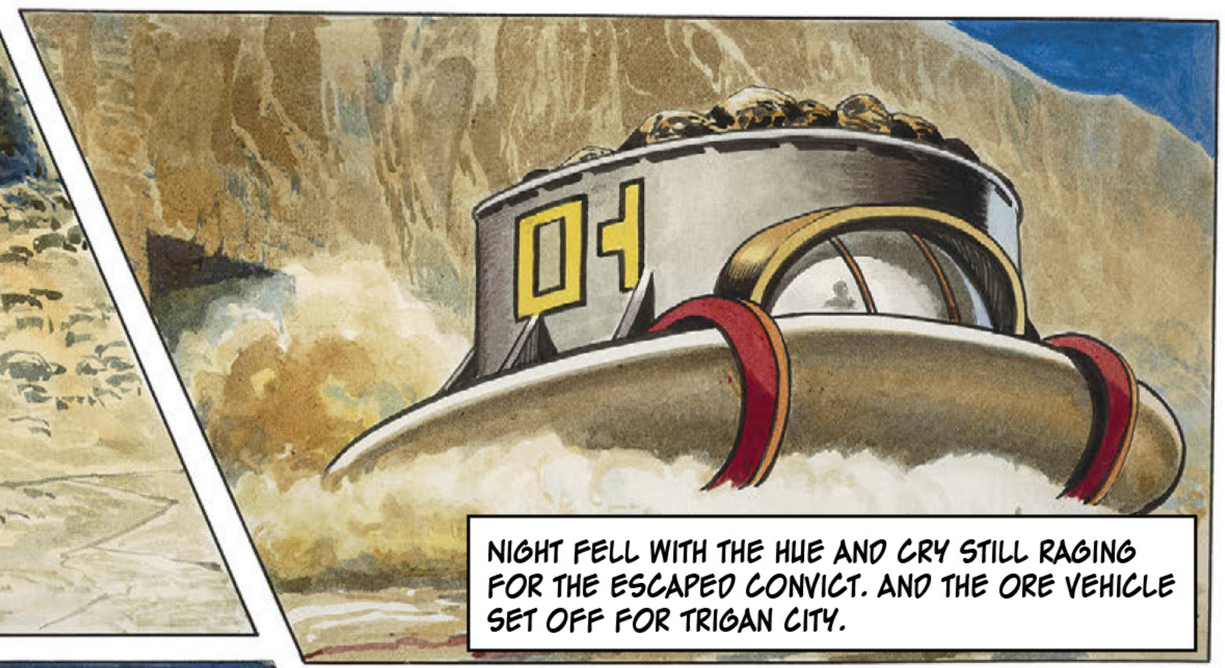
REEJA DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS A CLEANER AND SWEEPER EMPLOYED AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET.
TELL THE COURT WHAT YOU SAW ON THE NIGHT OF THE SEVENTH DAY OF ZUGG.
WELL, MY LORDS, I WAS SWEEPING THE STEPS NEAR THE BACK ENTRANCE THAT LEADS DOWN TO THE ARCHIVES ROOM WHEN I SAW LORD JANNO COME OUT. HE WAS CARRYING SOME PAPERS IN A FOLDER...

THE NEXT WITNESS INTRODUCED HIMSELF AS GORRA, A FISHERMAN...
YOU WERE IN YOUR BOAT AT THE HARBOUR THAT NIGHT WHEN THIS STRANGE CRAFT CAME IN... WHAT THEN?
LORD JANNO MET A FELLOW FROM THE CRAFT, GAVE HIM A FOLDER... AND RECEIVED A PURSE OF MONEY IN EXCHANGE!

NO OTHER EVIDENCE WAS NEEDED. DESPITE JANNO'S FRANTIC PLEAS, THE RESULT OF THE TRIAL WAS NEVER IN DOUBT. AS VANASS SAID...
HIS GUILT IS PLAIN, MY LORDS! I DEMAND THE FULL PENALTY, WHICH THE LAW OF THE EMPIRE DEMANDS OF ALL ITS SUBJECTS... WHETHER THEY BE HIGH-BORN OR LOW!
THEN... THE DREAD SENTENCE!
JANNO. YOU ARE STRIPPED OF YOUR RANK AND YOUR FAMILY TITLE... AND YOU WILL LABOUR FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS IN THE MINES!
THE MINES? OH, NO!
HE WAS TAKEN FROM THE HALL OF JUSTICE AND MANACLES WERE FORGED ON HIS WRISTS... TO REMAIN THERE UNTIL HE DIED!
THE MINES LAY IN THE MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY BEYOND THE PLAIN OF VORG. NO CONVICT WHO ENTERED THOSE FEARFUL CAVERNS EVER SET FOOT IN THE DAYLIGHT AGAIN. JANNO BECAME ONE OF THESE LIVING DEAD...
BUT, IN SECRET, JANNO WORKED ON THE MANACLES, TRYING DESPERATELY TO SLIP HIS HANDS THROUGH. THEN CAME SUCCESS!
I WILL STRIKE... NOW!
HE LEAPT... AND WOUND HIS CHAIN ROUND THE NECK OF THE BRUTAL GUARD!
THEN HE WAS RUNNING... WITH PROJECTILES SCREAMING ROUND HIS BENT HEAD!
CONVICT LOOSE! SHOOT TO KILL!

FREEING HIMSELF FROM HIS LOOSENED MANACLES, JANNO RACED OUT INTO THE DAYLIGHT...

THE GUARDS CAME RUSHING DOWN BOTH FLIGHTS OF STEPS AND PAST THE HUGE VEHICLE CONTAINING THE DAY'S OUTPUT OF ORE FROM THE MINE.
WHICH WAY DID HE GO?
HE COULD ONLY HAVE GONE THAT WAY... AND HE'LL NOT GET FAR!


NIGHT FELL WITH THE HUE AND CRY STILL RAGING FOR THE ESCAPED CONVICT. AND THE ORE VEHICLE SET OFF FOR TRIGAN CITY.

SOME DISTANCE FROM THE CITY, A DARK FIGURE DROPPED FROM IT AND ROLLED IN THE SOFT SAND OF THE PLAIN.
THAT ORE WAS SOFT AND MUDDY, THANK THE GODS!

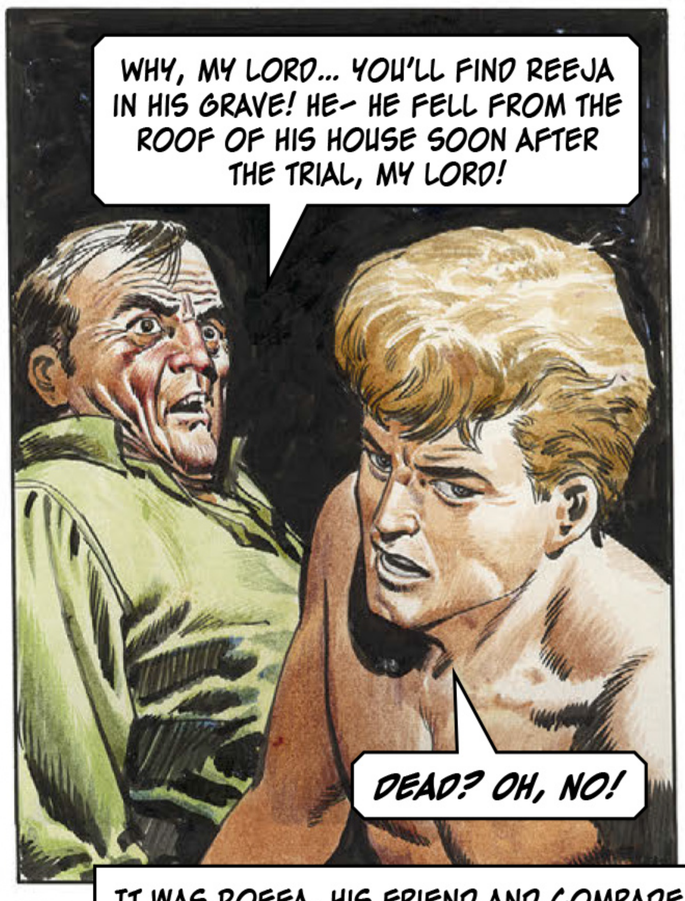
JANNO LAY THERE IN THE LIGHT OF ELEKTON'S MOONS, HIS MIND RACING.
WHAT NEXT? GO TO MY FATHER OR ONE OF MY COMRADES? NO! I CAN'T IMPLICATE THEM IN THIS TERRIBLE BUSINESS!

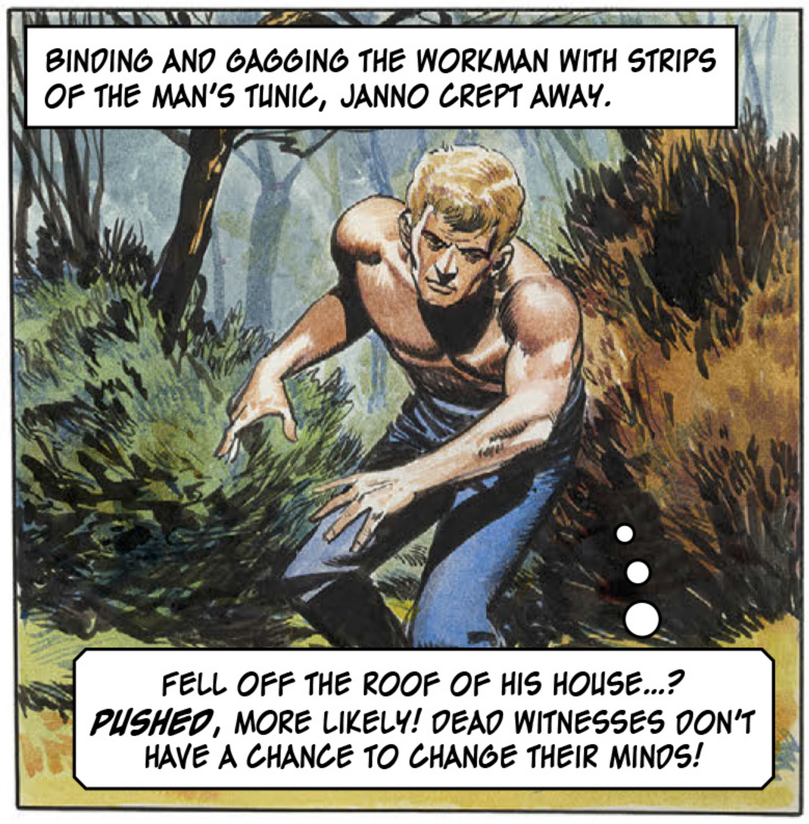
MY ONLY HOPE LIES WITH THE TWO WITNESSES AT MY TRIAL. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN BRIBED TO GIVE FALSE EVIDENCE... AND I MUST MAKE THEM TELL THE TRUTH!

WHEN DAWN BROKE OVER THE CITY, A HUMBLE WORKMAN WAS SWEEPING ONE OF THE PATHS LEADING UP TO AIR FLEET HEADQUARTERS.

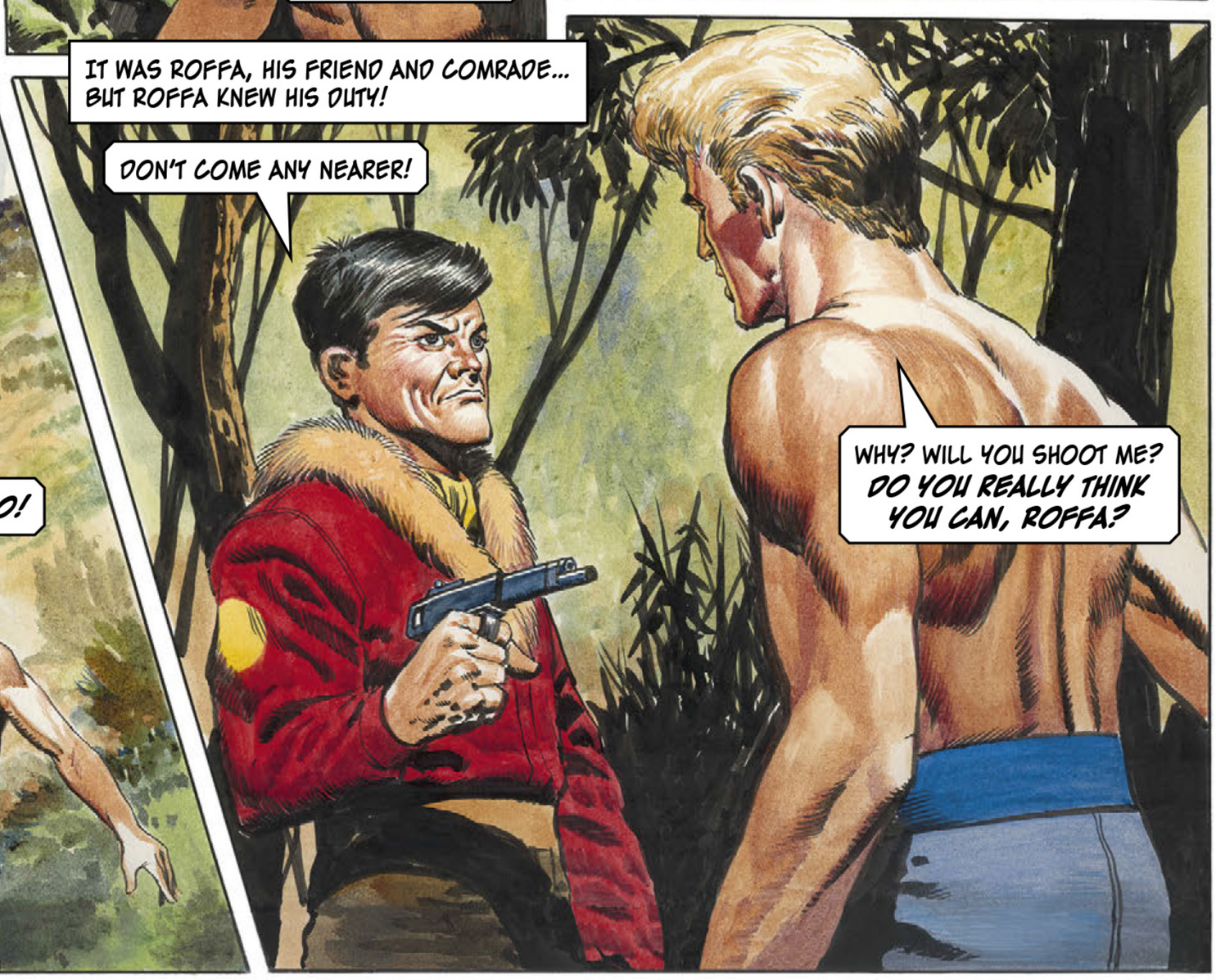
A TUNELESS WHISTLE WAS STRANGLED ON HIS LIPS!
UUUUUUUUUH-

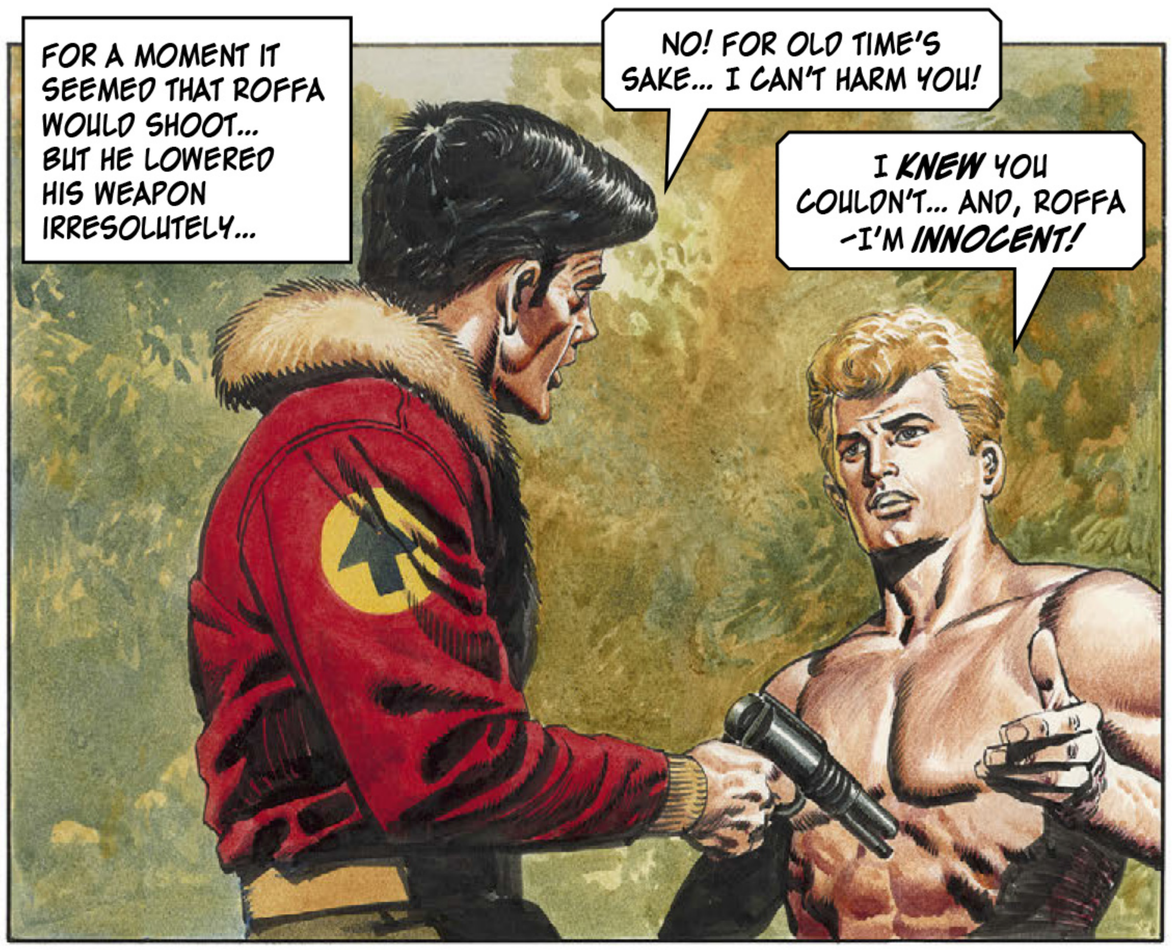
HE WAS DRAGGED INTO THE BUSHES-AND...
WHY! YOU- YOU'RE LORD JANNO!
LISTEN TO ME, WRETCH, IF YOU WANT TO LIVE! I WANT TO SPEAK TO THE SWEEPER NAMED REEJA... WHERE CAN I FIND HIM?


WHY, MY LORD... YOU'LL FIND REEJA IN HIS GRAVE! HE- HE FELL FROM THE ROOF OF HIS HOUSE SOON AFTER THE TRIAL, MY LORD!
DEAD? OH, NO!

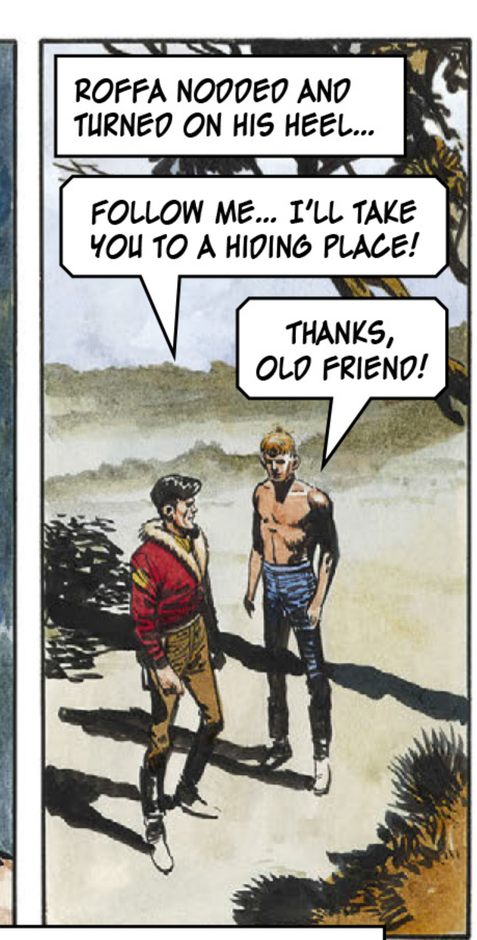

BINDING AND GAGGING THE WORKMAN WITH STRIPS OF THE MAN'S TUNIC, JANNO CREPT AWAY.
FELL OFF THE ROOF OF HIS HOUSE...? PUSHED, MORE LIKELY! DEAD WITNESSES DON'T HAVE A CHANCE TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS!

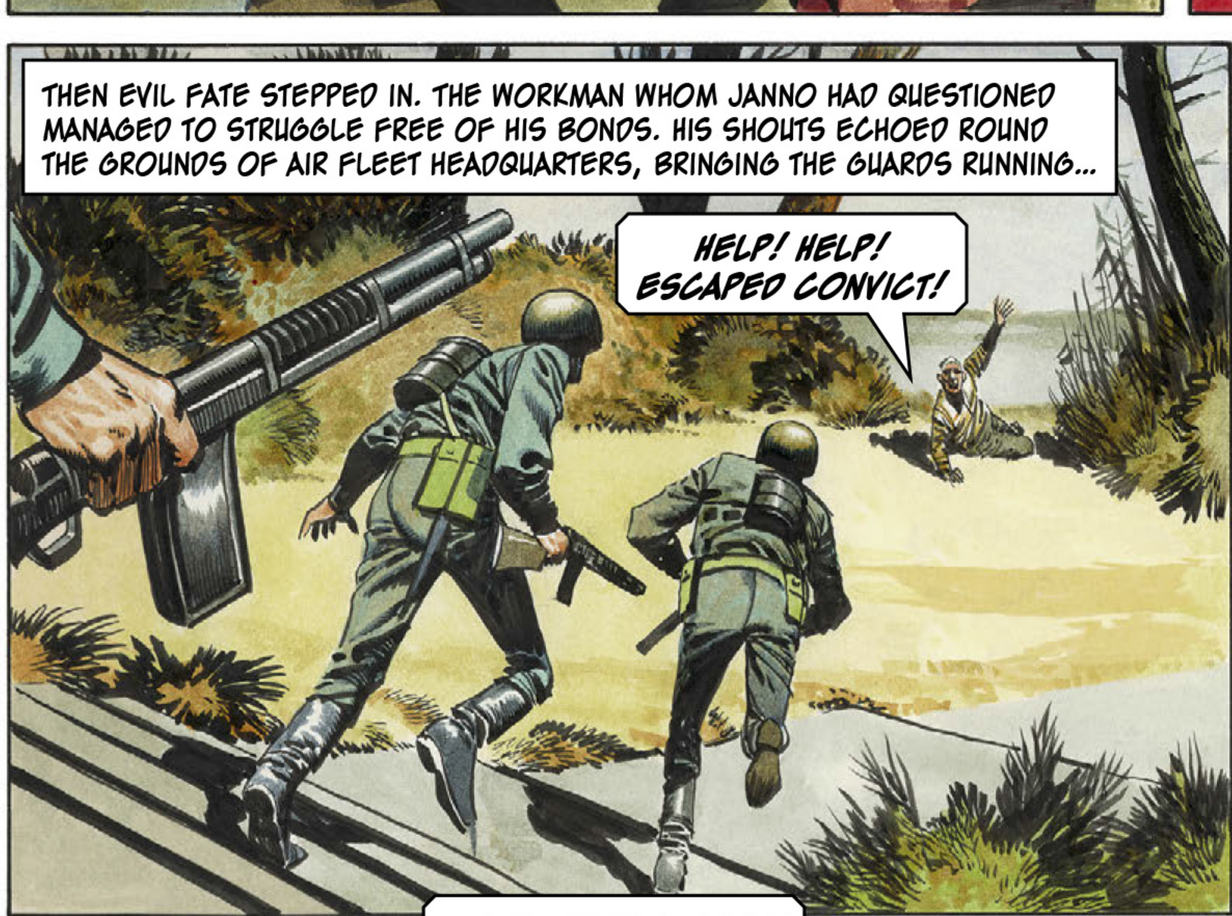
SUDDENLY, HE CAME FACE TO FACE WITH A YOUNG OFFICER IN AIR FLEET UNIFORM. THE OTHER'S HAND WENT FOR HIS GUN!
BY ALL THE STARS... JANNO!

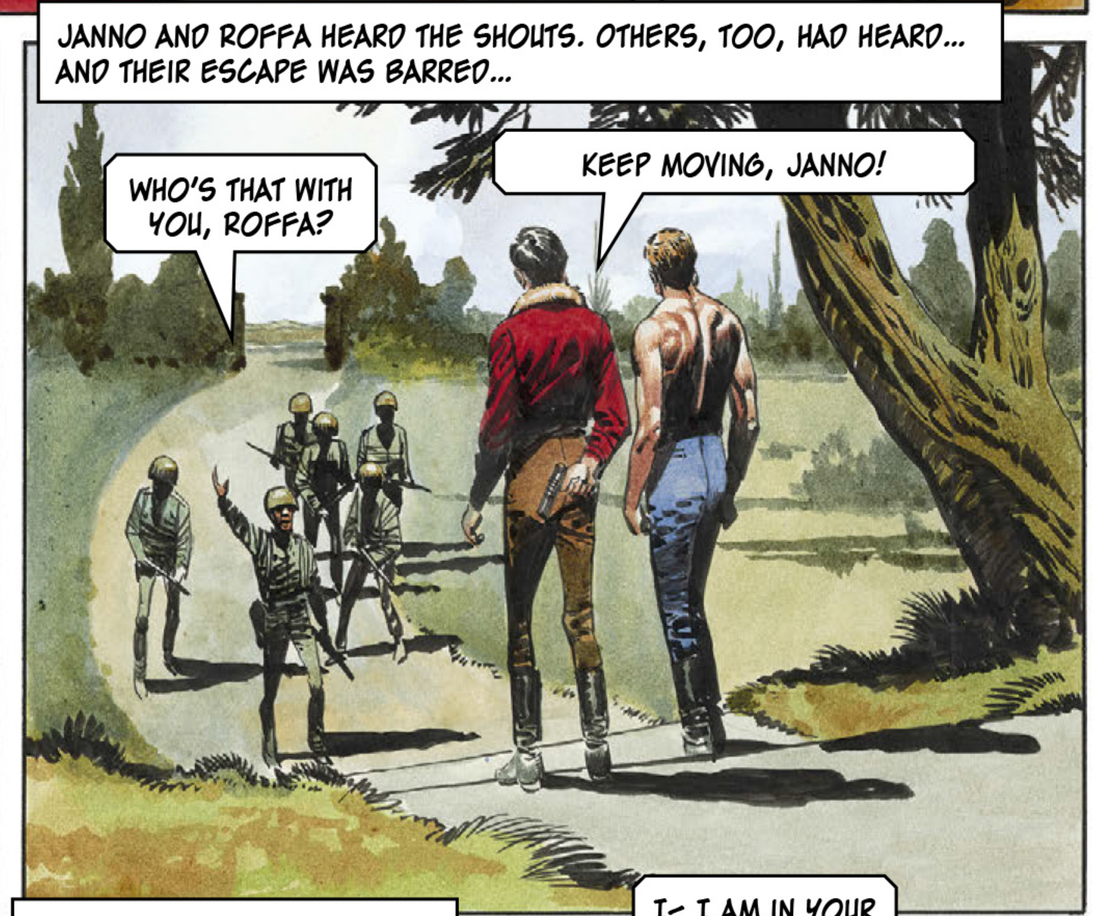

IT WAS ROFFA, HIS FRIEND AND COMRADE... BUT ROFFA KNEW HIS DUTY!
DON'T COME ANY NEARER!
WHY? WILL YOU SHOOT ME? DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN, ROFFA?


FOR A MOMENT IT SEEMED THAT ROFFA WOULD SHOOT... BUT HE LOWERED HIS WEAPON IRRESOLUTELY...
NO! FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE... I CAN'T HARM YOU!
I KNEW YOU COULDN'T... AND, ROFFA -I'M INNOCENT!

BUT THE WITNESSES AT YOUR TRIAL... THEIR EVIDENCE WAS QUITE CONCLUSIVE!
THEY WERE LYING! AND ONE OF THEM HAS ALREADY BEEN SILENCED FOREVER! ROFFA, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME FIND THE SECOND WITNESS... IF IT ISN'T ALREADY TOO LATE!

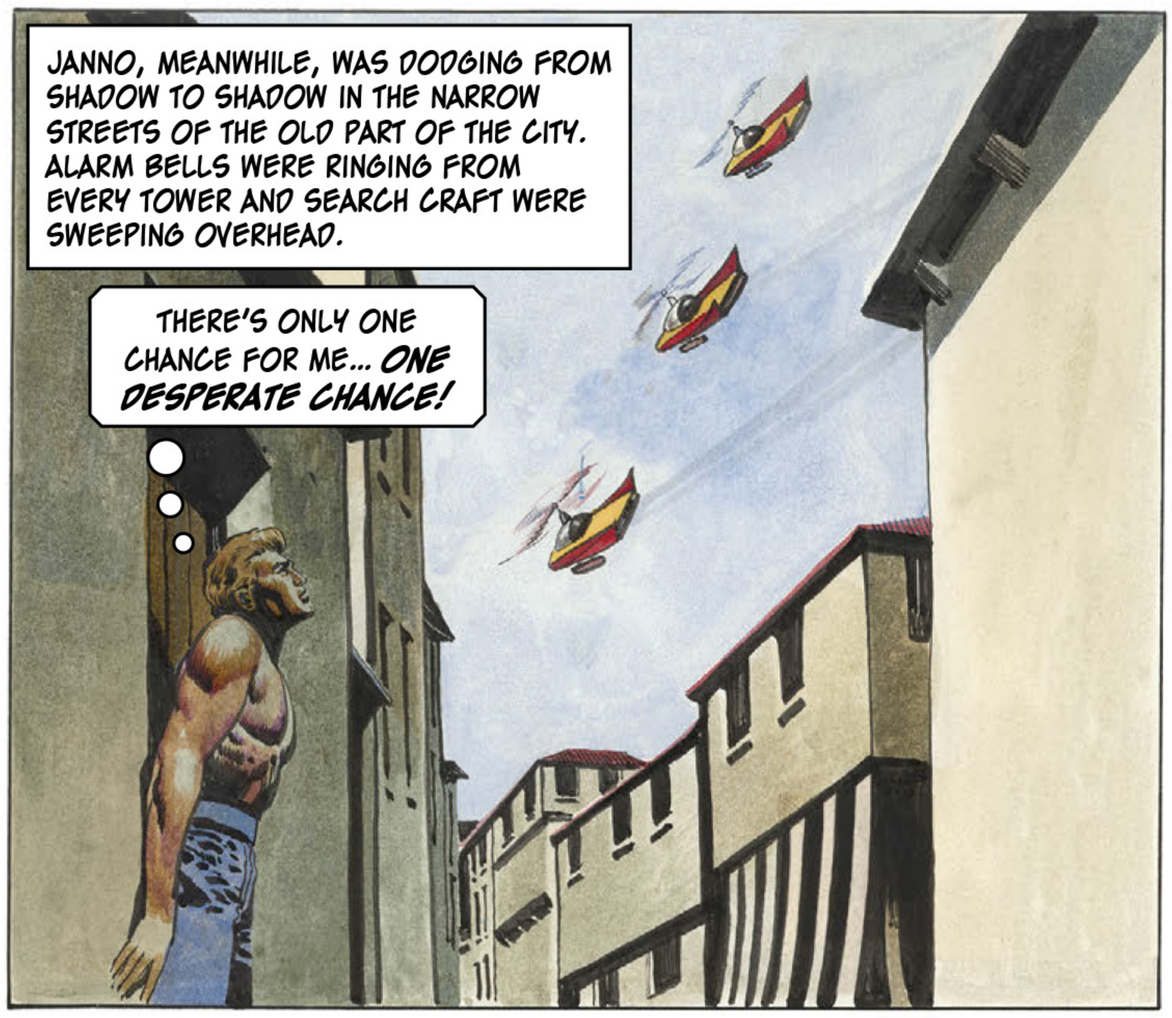

ROFFA NODDED AND TURNED ON HIS HEEL...
FOLLOW ME... I'LL TAKE YOU TO A HIDING PLACE!
THANKS, OLD FRIEND!


THEN EVIL FATE STEPPED IN. THE WORKMAN WHOM JANNO HAD QUESTIONED MANAGED TO STRUGGLE FREE OF HIS BONDS. HIS SHOUTS ECHOED ROUND THE GROUNDS OF AIR FLEET HEADQUARTERS, BRINGING THE GUARDS RUNNING...
HELP! HELP! ESCAPED CONVICT!


JANNO AND ROFFA HEARD THE SHOUTS. OTHERS, TOO, HAD HEARD... AND THEIR ESCAPE WAS BARRED...
WHO'S THAT WITH YOU, ROFFA?
KEEP MOVING, JANNO!

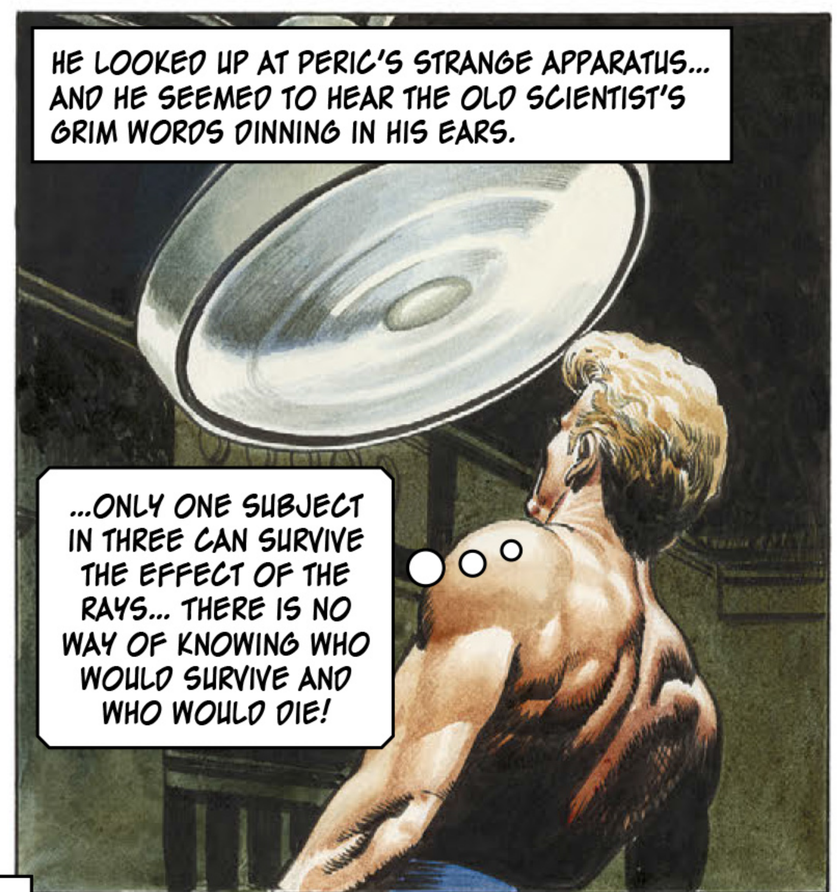
AND THEN...
DON'T MAKE A MOVE!
RUN FOR YOUR LIFE, JANNO!
WHY... BY ALL THE STARS! IT'S JANNO!

WHEN THE FUGITIVE WAS WELL CLEAR, ROFFA DROPPED HIS WEAPON TO THE GROUND.
I- I AM IN YOUR HANDS, CAPTAIN!

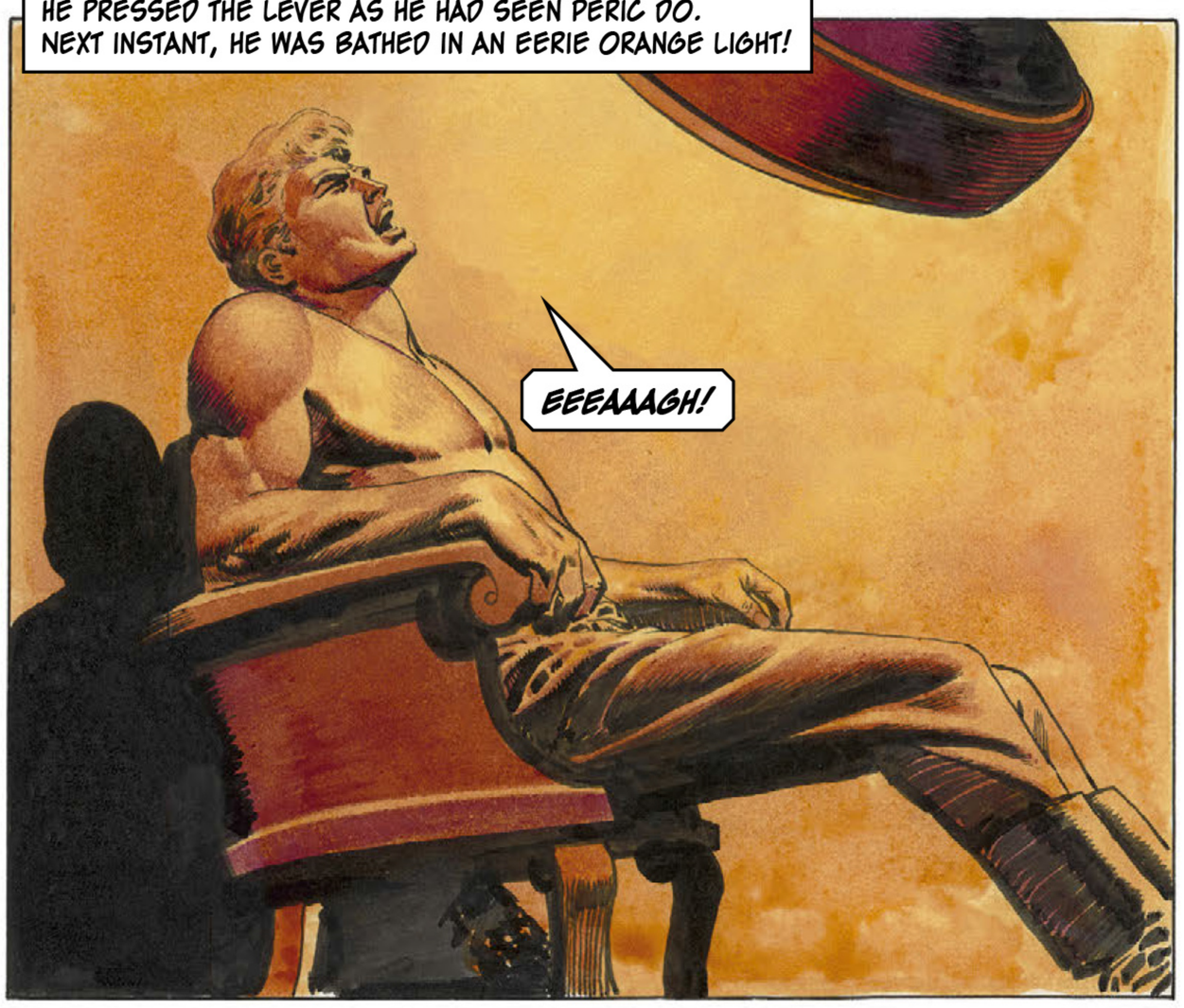

JANNO, MEANWHILE, WAS DODGING FROM SHADOW TO SHADOW IN THE NARROW STREETS OF THE OLD PART OF THE CITY. ALARM BELLS WERE RINGING FROM EVERY TOWER AND SEARCH CRAFT WERE SWEEPING OVERHEAD.
THERE'S ONLY ONE CHANCE FOR ME... ONE DESPERATE CHANCE!

TAKING COVER WHENEVER THE CRAFT WERE CLOSE, HE MADE HIS WAY TOWARDS THE LOOMING BULK OF PERIC'S LABORATORY.

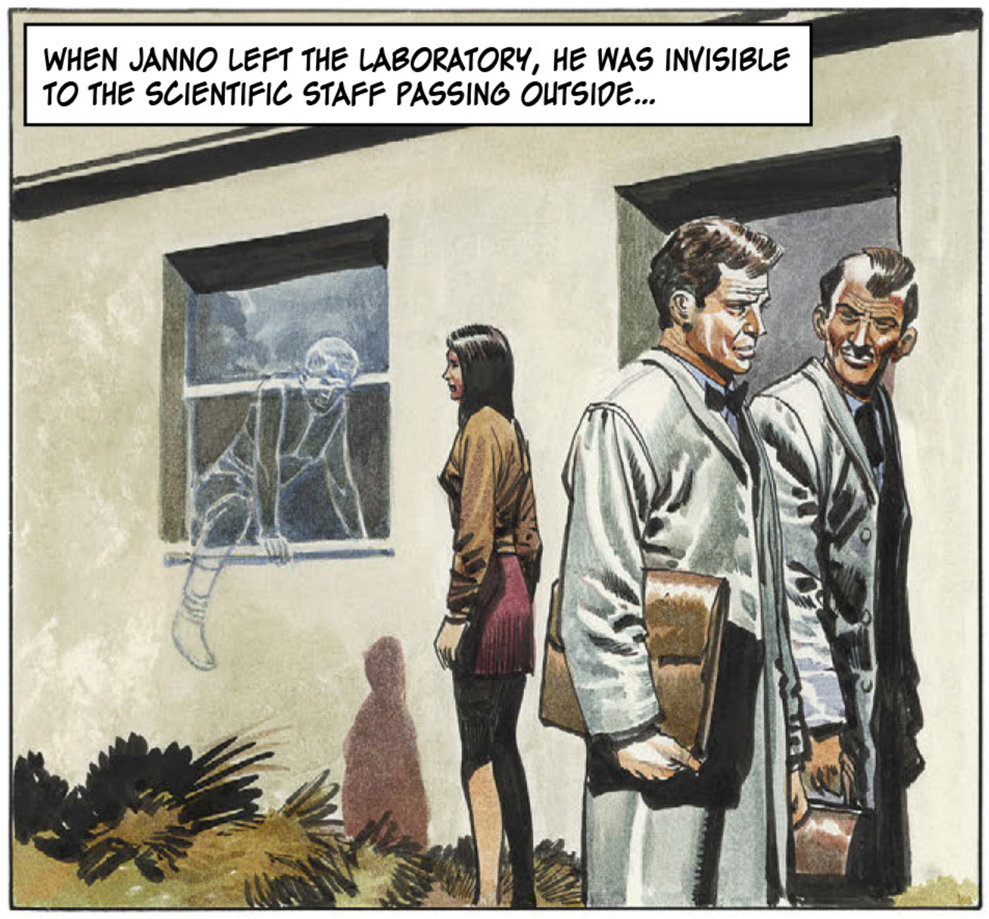
SOON HE WAS INSIDE...
DARE I DO WHAT HAS TO BE DONE?

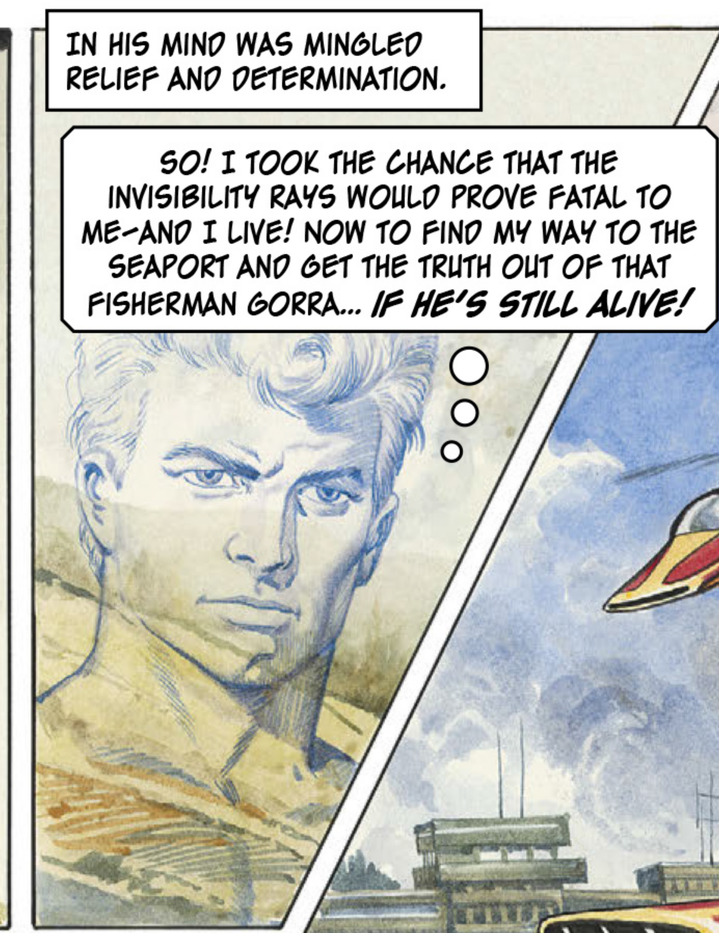

HE LOOKED UP AT PERIC'S STRANGE APPARATUS... AND HE SEEMED TO HEAR THE OLD SCIENTIST'S GRIM WORDS DINNING IN HIS EARS.
...ONLY ONE SUBJECT IN THREE CAN SURVIVE THE EFFECT OF THE RAYS... THERE IS NO WAY OF KNOWING WHO WOULD SURVIVE AND WHO WOULD DIE!

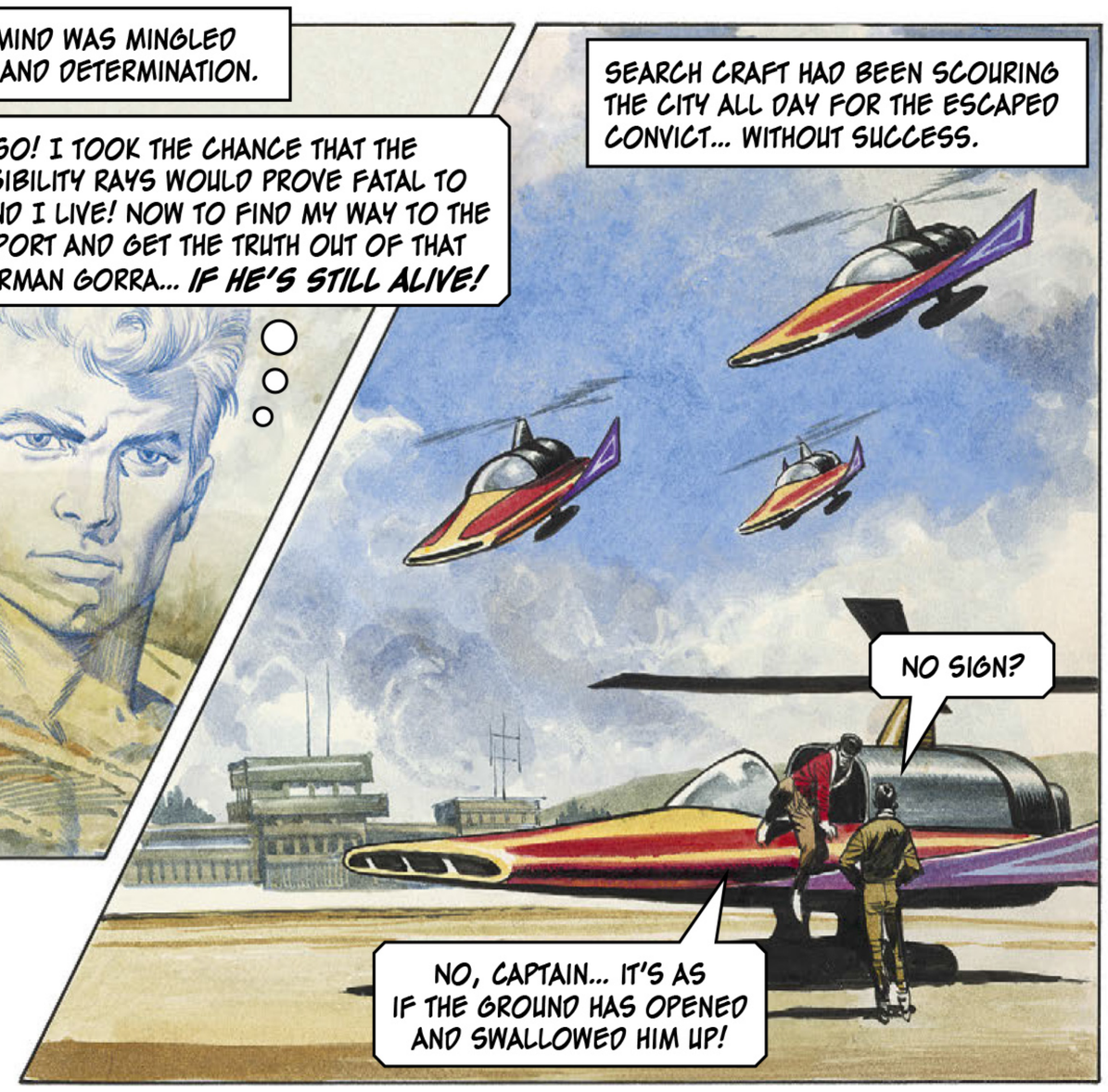
AND THEN HIS MIND WAS MADE UP!
IT'S EITHER THIS... OR A LIVING DEATH IN THE MINES!


HE PRESSED THE LEVER AS HE HAD SEEN PERIC DO. NEXT INSTANT, HE WAS BATHED IN AN EERIE ORANGE LIGHT!
EEEAAAGH!

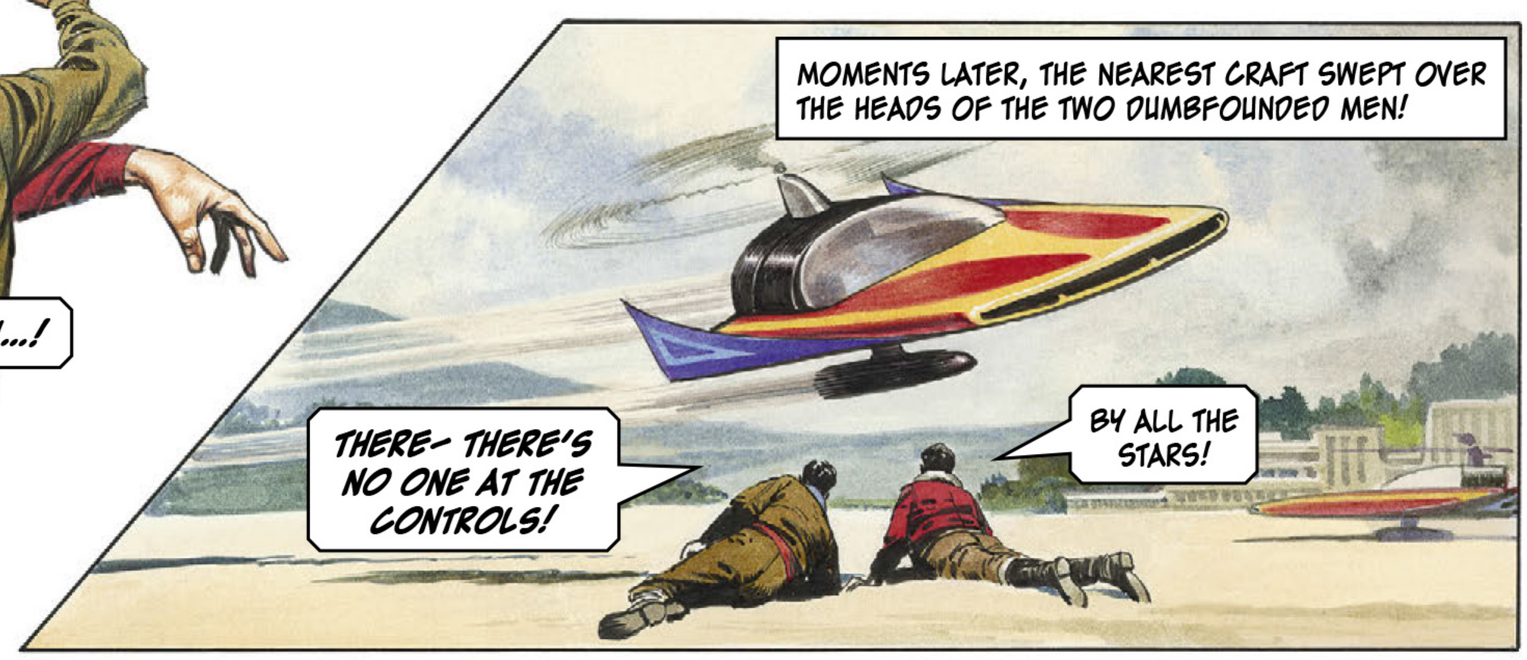
WHEN THE LIGHT FADED, THE LABORATORY WAS EMPTY... JANNO HAD VANISHED!

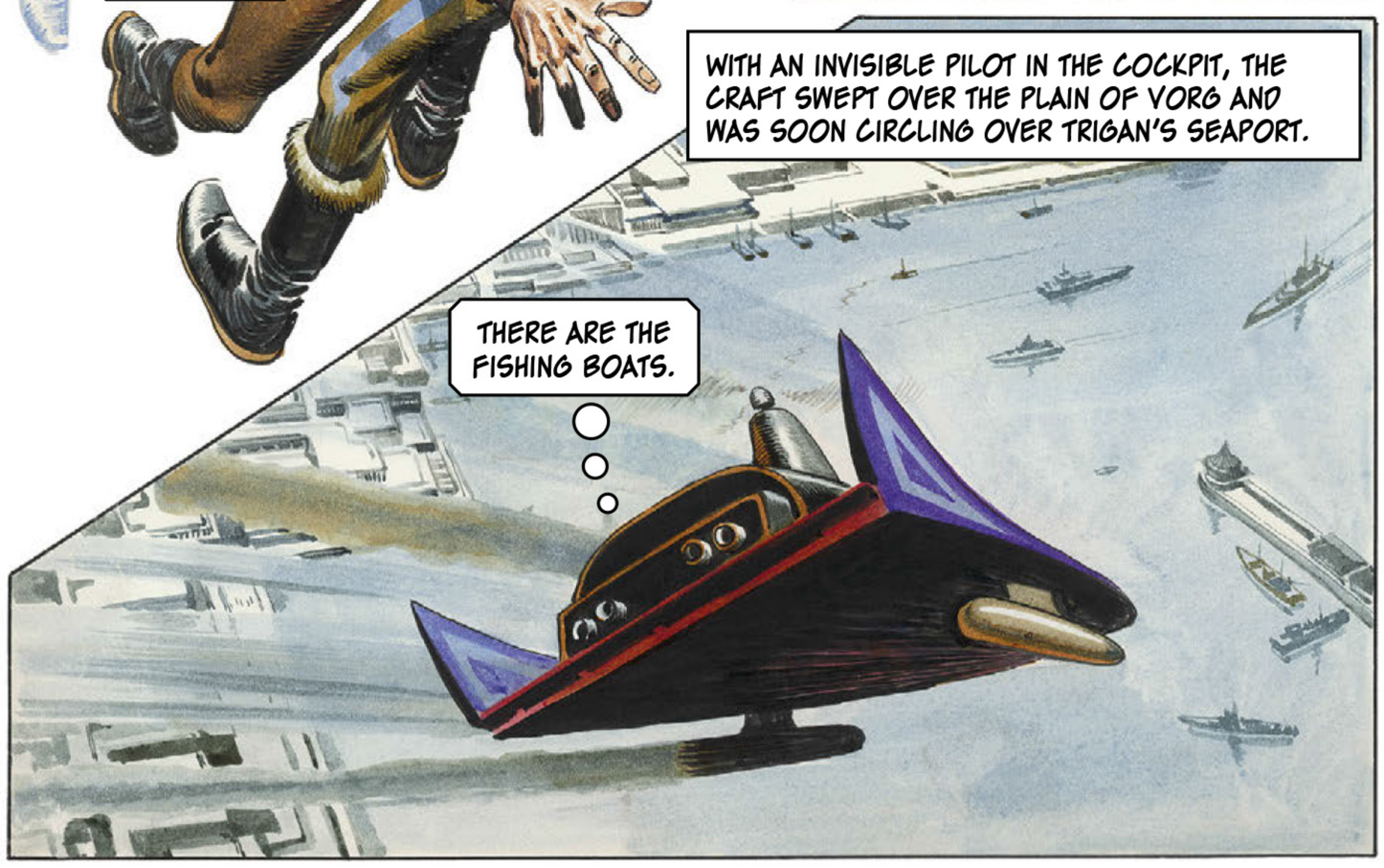

WHEN JANNO LEFT THE LABORATORY, HE WAS INVISIBLE TO THE SCIENTIFIC STAFF PASSING OUTSIDE...


IN HIS MIND WAS MINGLED RELIEF AND DETERMINATION.
SO! I TOOK THE CHANCE THAT THE INVISIBILITY RAYS WOULD PROVE FATAL TO ME–AND I LIVE! NOW TO FIND MY WAY TO THE SEAPORT AND GET THE TRUTH OUT OF THAT FISHERMAN GORRA... IF HE'S STILL ALIVE!


SEARCH CRAFT HAD BEEN SCOURING THE CITY ALL DAY FOR THE ESCAPED CONVICT... WITHOUT SUCCESS.
NO SIGN?
NO, CAPTAIN... IT'S AS IF THE GROUND HAS OPENED AND SWALLOWED HIM UP!

AND THEN...
AAAAAAH...!
UUUUUUGH!

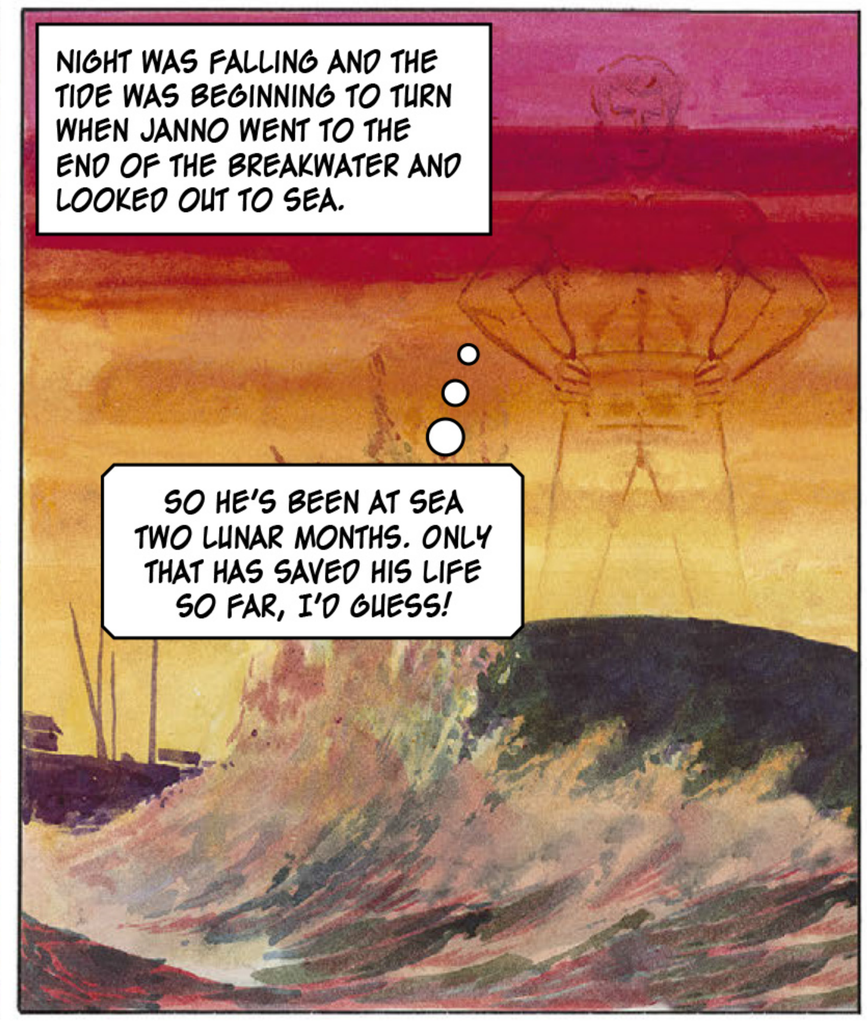

MOMENTS LATER, THE NEAREST CRAFT SWEPT OVER THE HEADS OF THE TWO DUMBFOUNDED MEN!
THERE– THERE'S NO ONE AT THE CONTROLS!
BY ALL THE STARS!

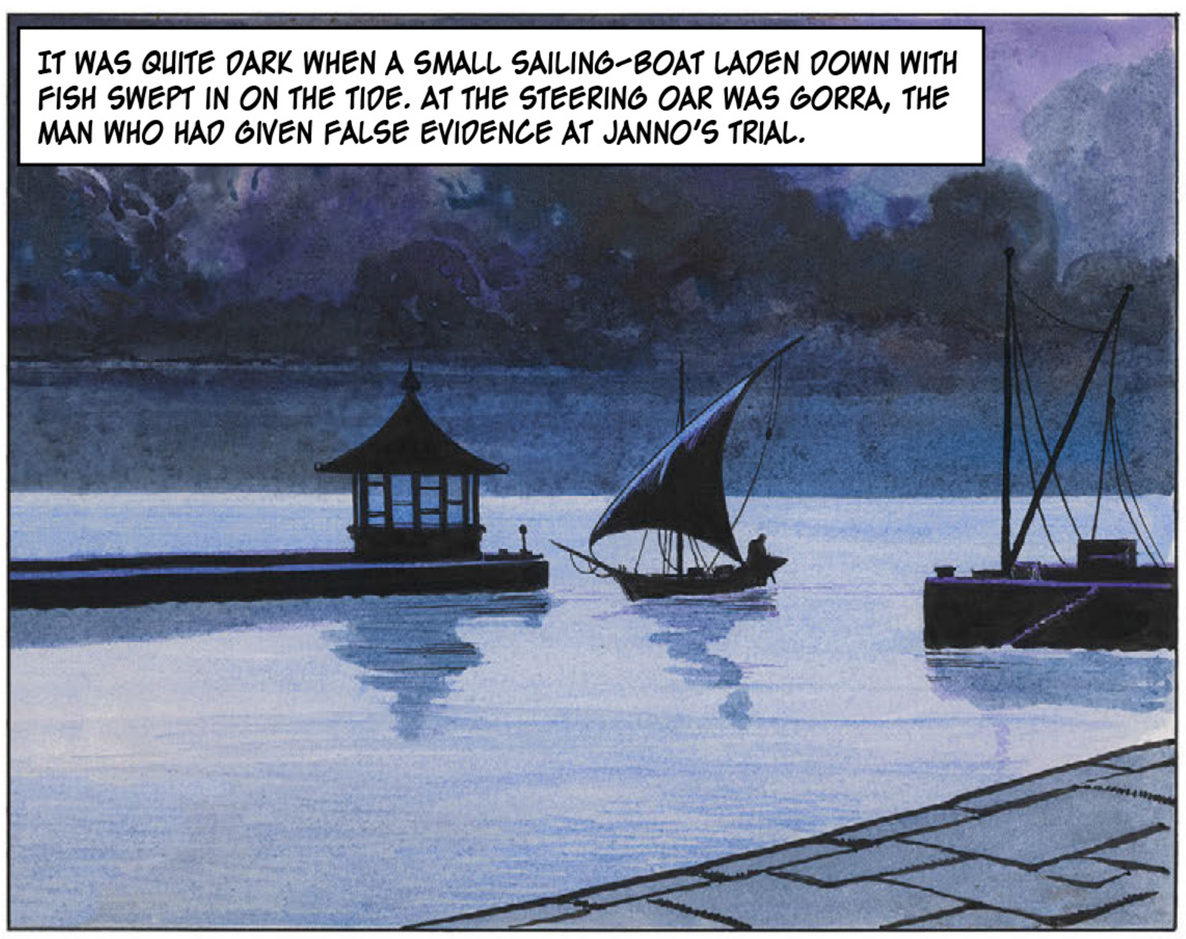

WITH AN INVISIBLE PILOT IN THE COCKPIT, THE CRAFT SWEPT OVER THE PLAIN OF VORG AND WAS SOON CIRCLING OVER TRIGAN'S SEAPORT.
THERE ARE THE FISHING BOATS.

AN OLD FISHERMAN WAS LEANING OVER THE WALL, STARING IDLY DOWN AT THE BOATS...

...WHEN THE TIP OF JANNO'S FINGER WAS RAMMED HARD AGAINST HIS BACK... AND A HARSH WHISPER CHILLED HIS BLOOD!
AAAAAAAGH!
DON'T TURN ROUND! THIS IS A GUN! TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND THE FISHERMAN NAMED GORRA!

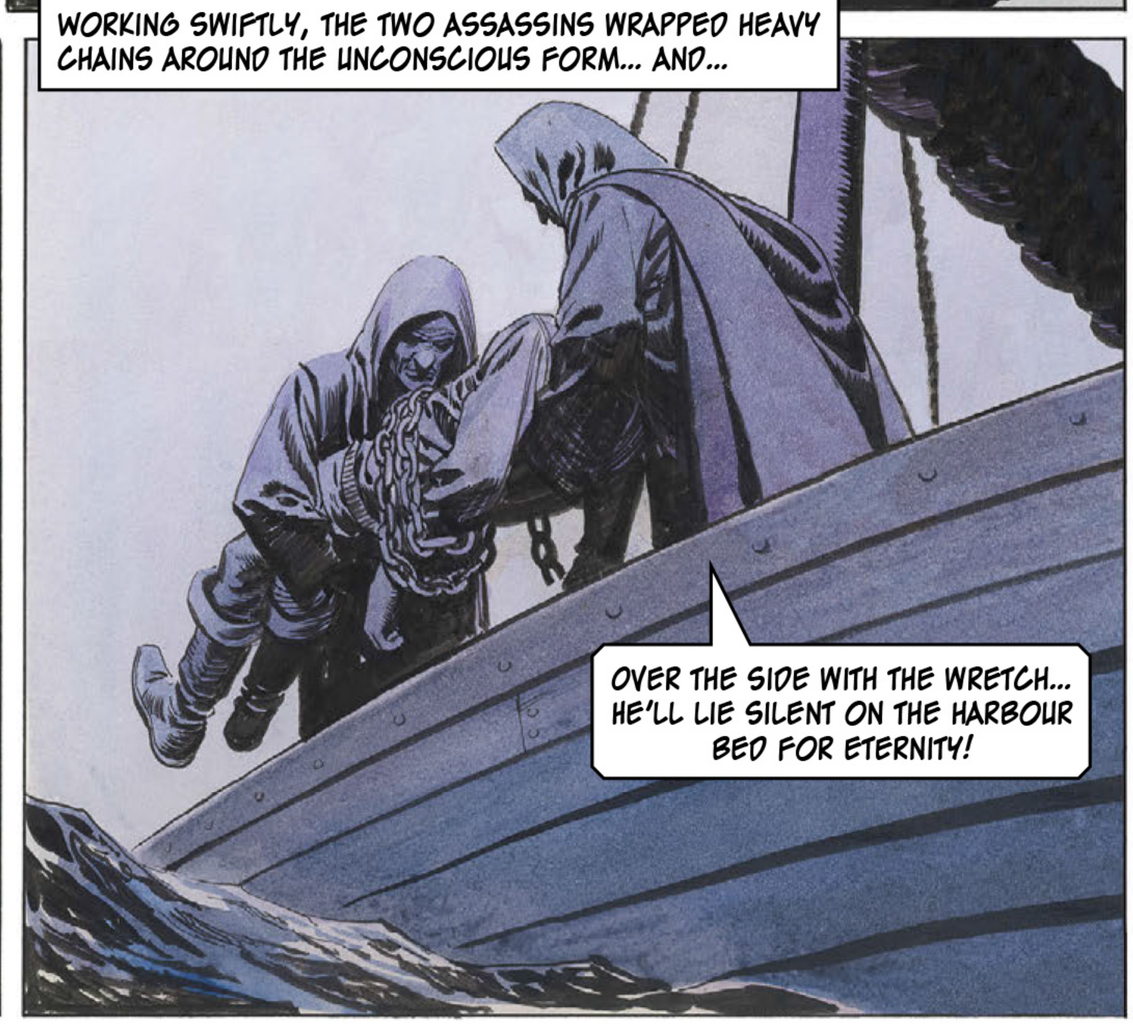
DON'T HURT ME, MASTER... I'LL TELL! GORRA'S BEEN AT SEA THESE LAST TWO LUNAR MONTHS... AND HE'S EXPECTED BACK WITH THE EVENING TIDE TONIGHT!
TONIGHT, EH?

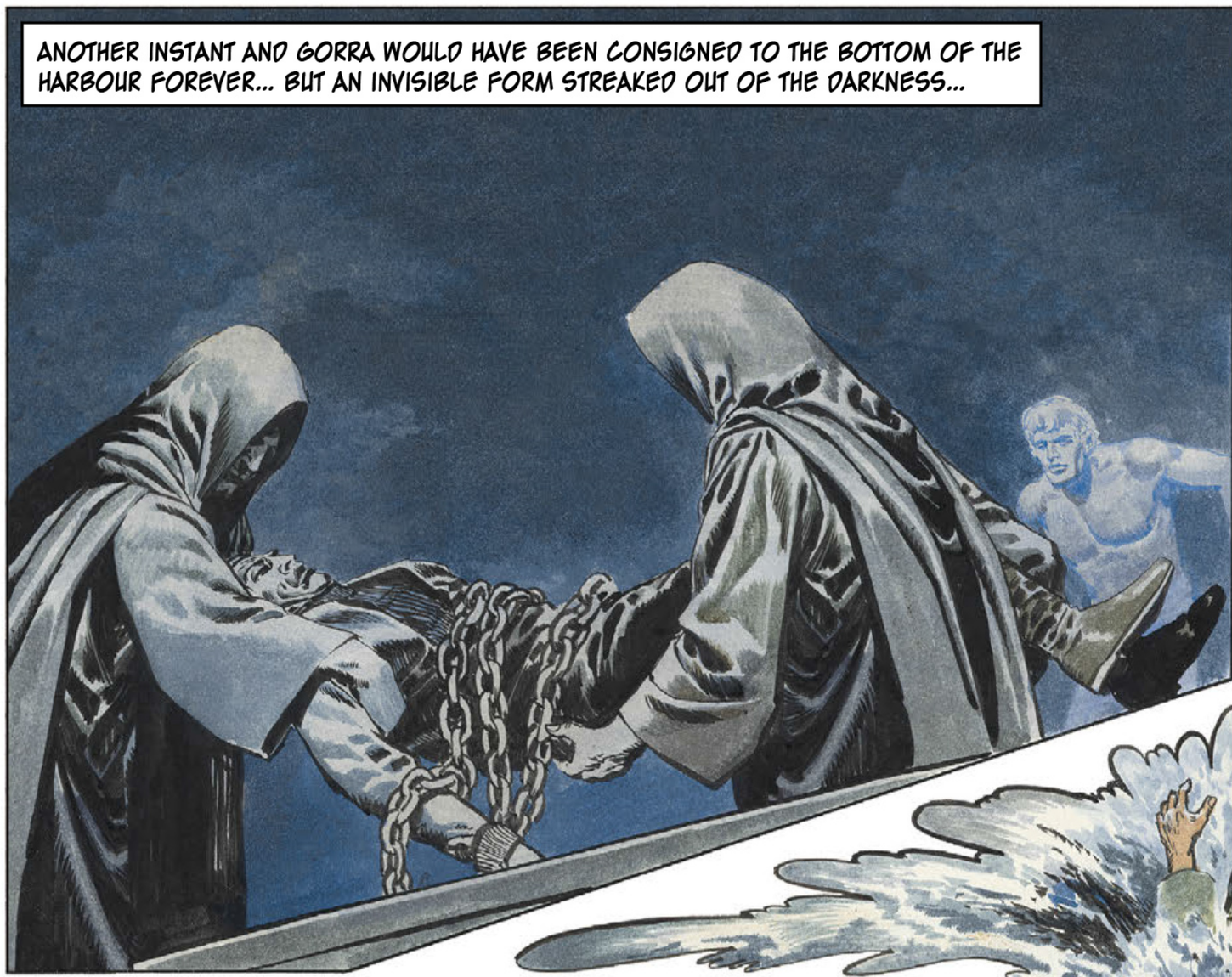

NIGHT WAS FALLING AND THE TIDE WAS BEGINNING TO TURN WHEN JANNO WENT TO THE END OF THE BREAKWATER AND LOOKED OUT TO SEA.
SO HE'S BEEN AT SEA TWO LUNAR MONTHS. ONLY THAT HAS SAVED HIS LIFE SO FAR, I'D GUESS!

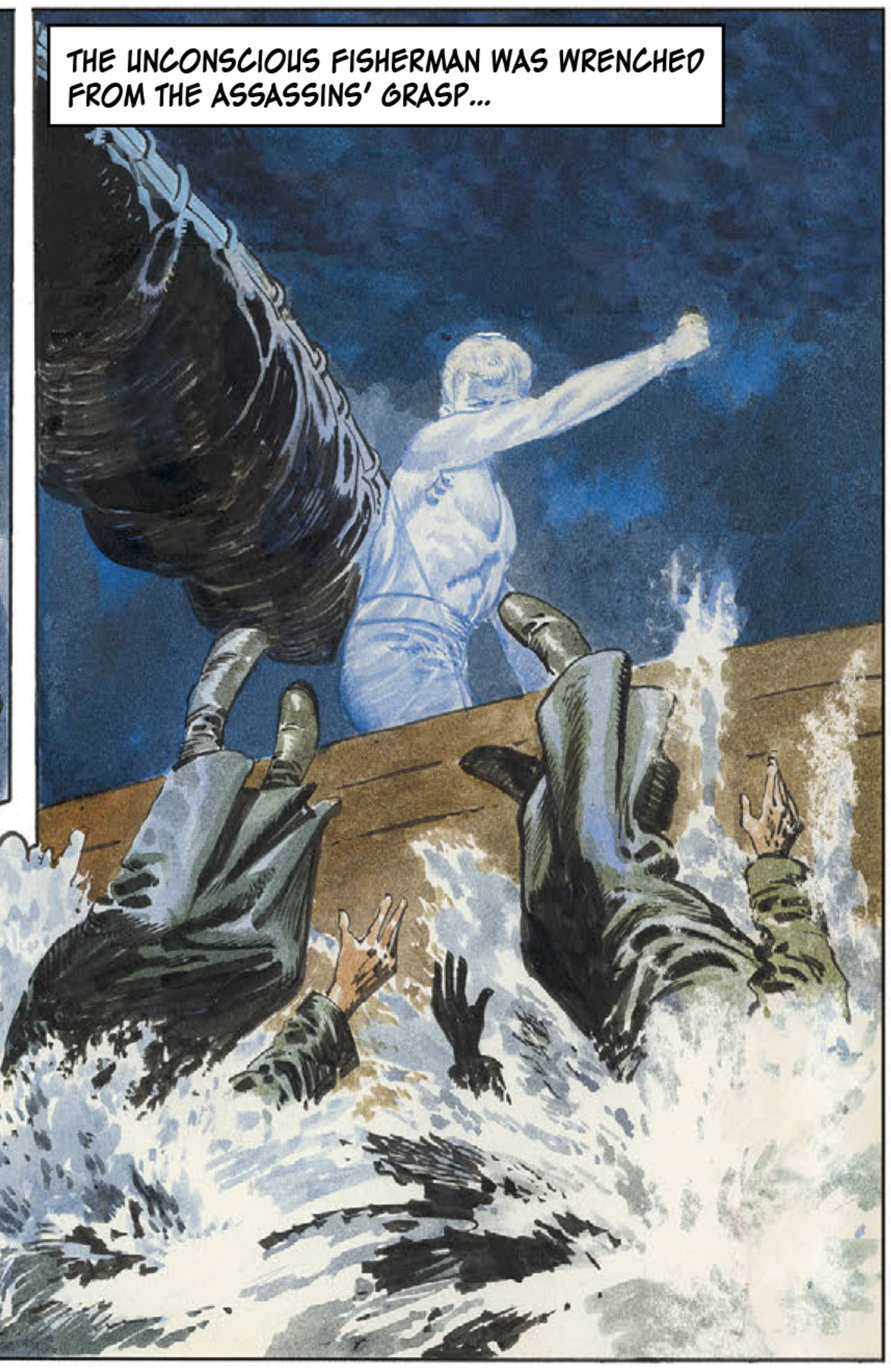

IT WAS QUITE DARK WHEN A SMALL SAILING-BOAT LADEN DOWN WITH FISH SWEPT IN ON THE TIDE. AT THE STEERING OAR WAS GORRA, THE MAN WHO HAD GIVEN FALSE EVIDENCE AT JANNO'S TRIAL.

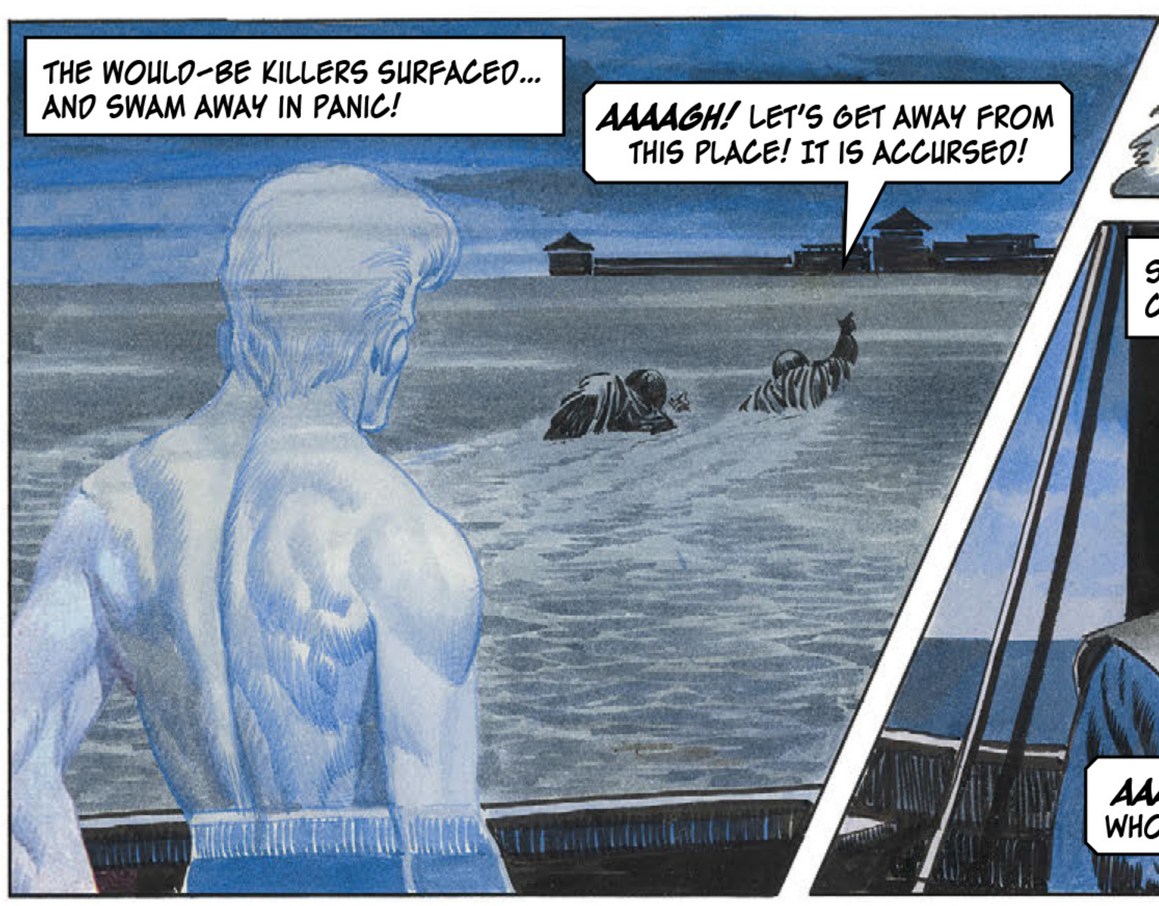
AS THE CRAFT CAME ALONGSIDE THE JETTY, TWO DARK FIGURES STEPPED OUT OF THE SHADOWS.
WHO'S THAT...? AAAAAH!

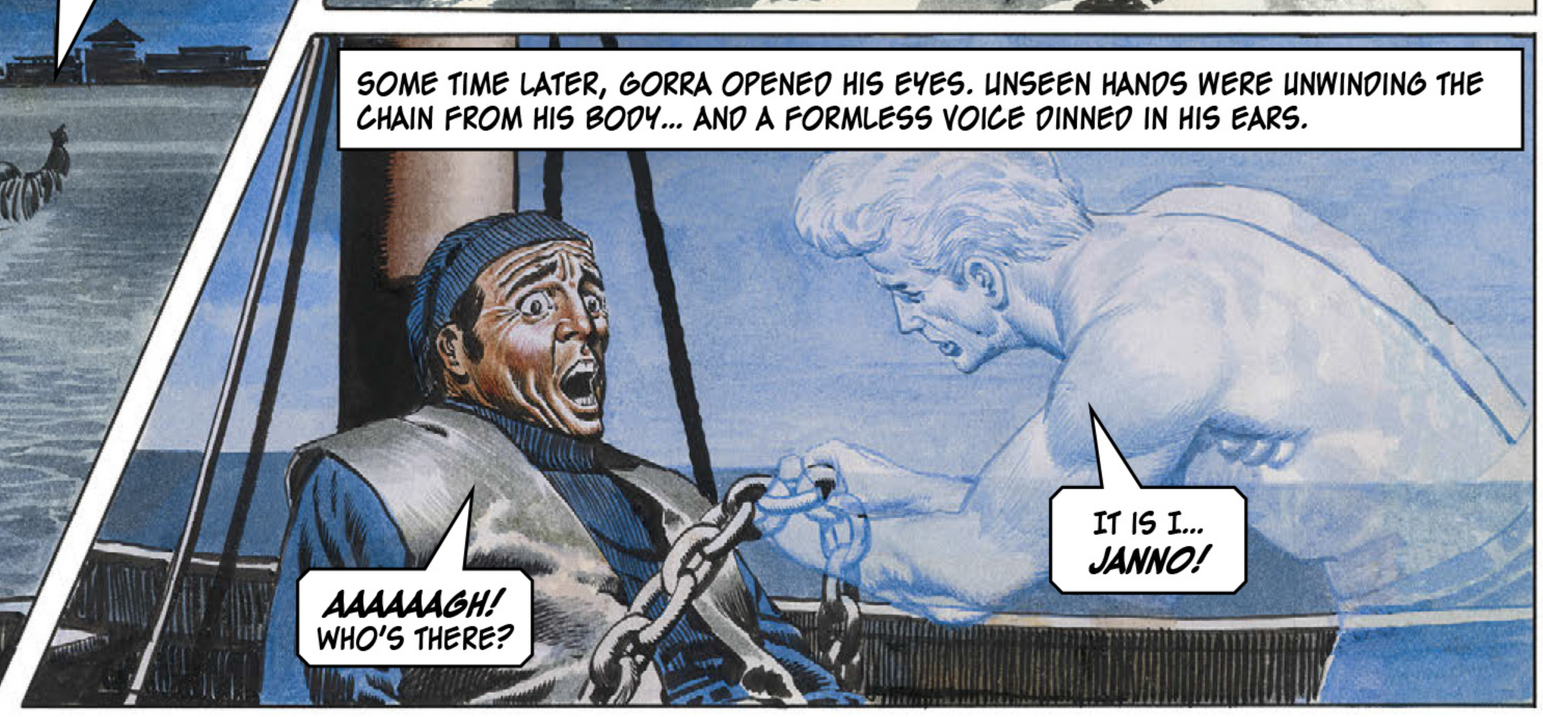
A SILENT WEAPON FELLED THE FISHERMAN!

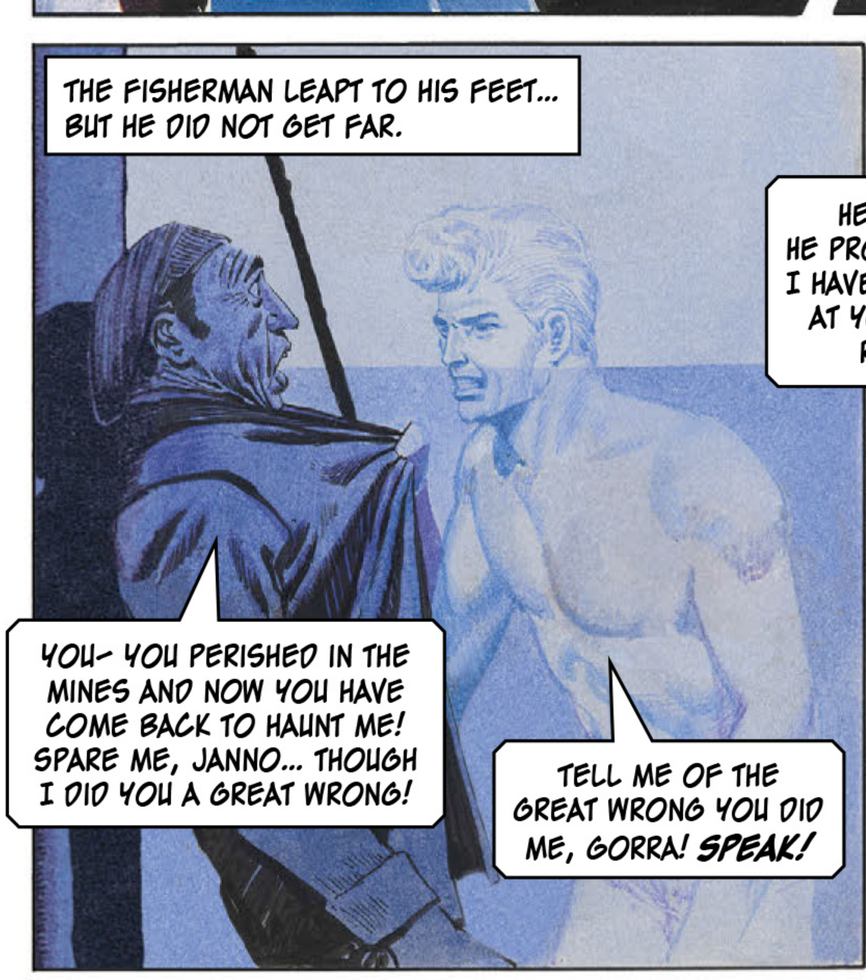

WORKING SWIFTLY, THE TWO ASSASSINS WRAPPED HEAVY CHAINS AROUND THE UNCONSCIOUS FORM... AND...
OVER THE SIDE WITH THE WRETCH... HE'LL LIE SILENT ON THE HARBOUR BED FOR ETERNITY!

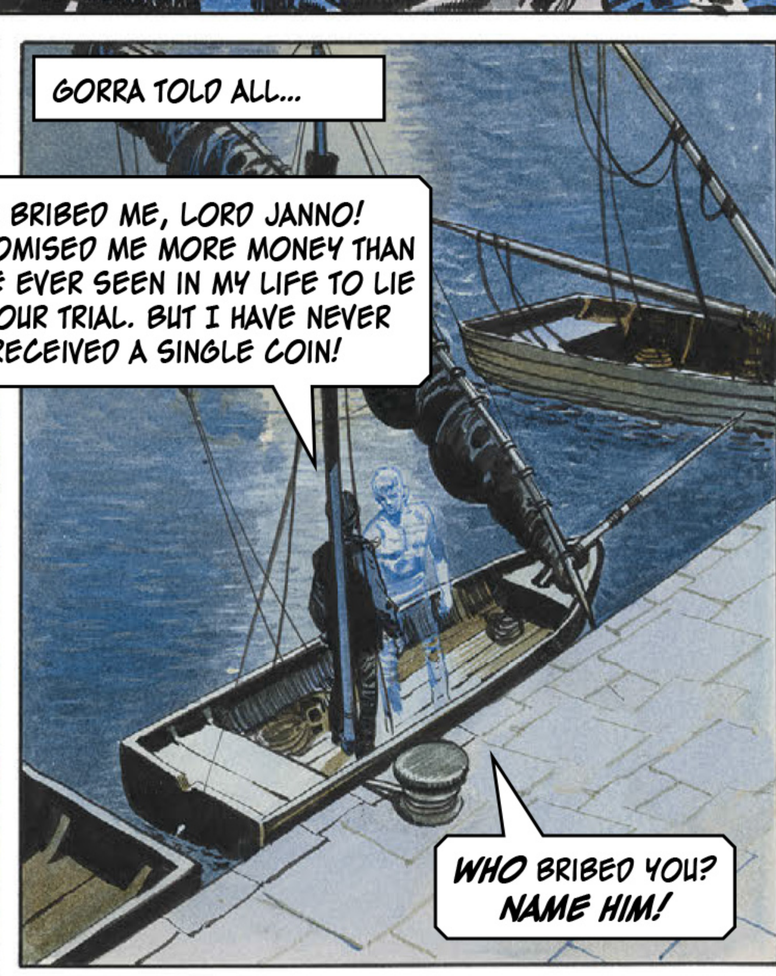

ANOTHER INSTANT AND GORRA WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSIGNED TO THE BOTTOM OF THE HARBOUR FOREVER... BUT AN INVISIBLE FORM STREAKED OUT OF THE DARKNESS...


THE UNCONSCIOUS FISHERMAN WAS WRENCHED FROM THE ASSASSINS' GRASP...


THE WOULD-BE KILLERS SURFACED... AND SWAM AWAY IN PANIC!
AAAAGH! LET'S GET AWAY FROM THIS PLACE! IT IS ACCURSED!


SOME TIME LATER, GORRA OPENED HIS EYES. UNSEEN HANDS WERE UNWINDING THE CHAIN FROM HIS BODY... AND A FORMLESS VOICE DINNED IN HIS EARS.
AAAAAAGH! WHO'S THERE?
IT IS I... JANNO!


THE FISHERMAN LEAPT TO HIS FEET... BUT HE DID NOT GET FAR.
YOU- YOU PERISHED IN THE MINES AND NOW YOU HAVE COME BACK TO HAUNT ME! SPARE ME, JANNO... THOUGH I DID YOU A GREAT WRONG!
TELL ME OF THE GREAT WRONG YOU DID ME, GORRA! SPEAK!

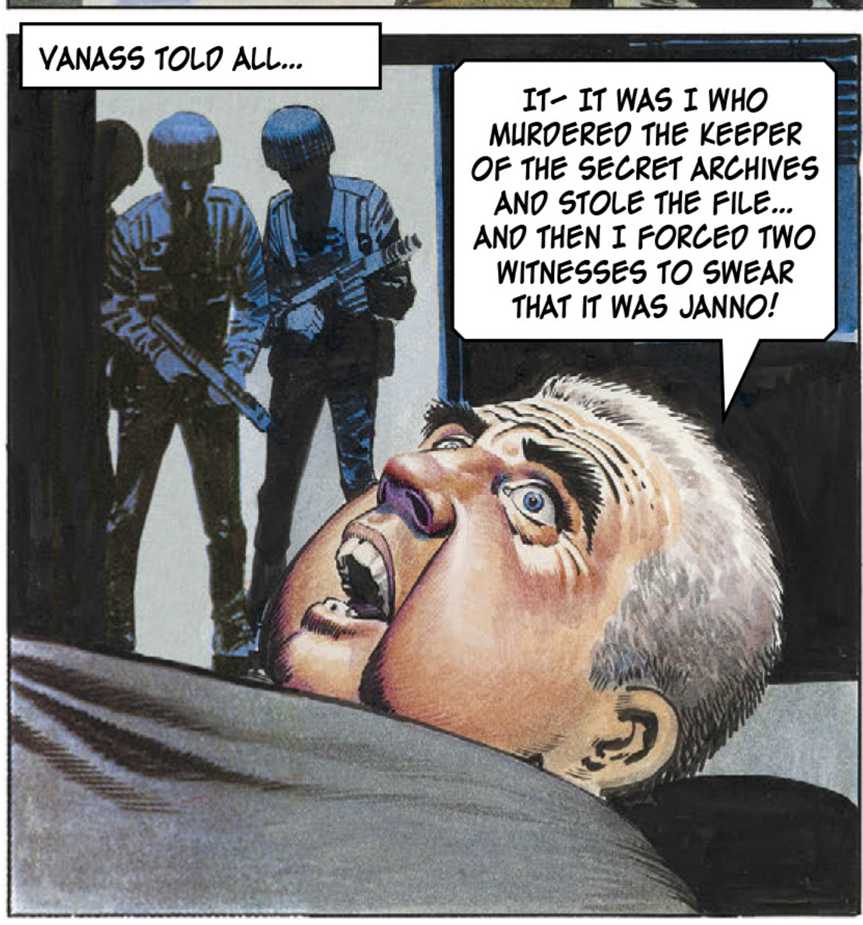

GORRA TOLD ALL...
HE BRIBED ME, LORD JANNO! HE PROMISED ME MORE MONEY THAN I HAVE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE TO LIE AT YOUR TRIAL. BUT I HAVE NEVER RECEIVED A SINGLE COIN!
WHO BRIBED YOU? NAME HIM!

VANASS!

THAT NIGHT, VANASS, THE COLONEL OF THE IMPERIAL POLICE, HAD TWO TERRIFIED CALLERS.
YOU OBEYED MY INSTRUCTIONS AND SILENCED THE FISHERMAN FOREVER?
WE... WE WERE ABOUT TO THROW HIM INTO THE HARBOUR, COLONEL... WHEN...
WHEN SOMETHING SMASHED INTO US!
YOU ARE TELLING ME THAT YOU FAILED? THAT GORRA IS FREE TO BETRAY ME WITH HIS WAGGING TONGUE?
WE ARE NOT TO BLAME, COLONEL!
THIS THING CAME AT US-AN EVIL SPIRIT!
VANASS' FURY WAS TERRIBLE TO BEHOLD.
FOOLS! BUNGLERS! HOW DARE YOU SPEAK TO ME OF EVIL SPIRITS!
EEEEEEGH!
AND THEN... THE LIGHT WENT OUT!
AAAAH!
THE COLONEL OF THE IMPERIAL POLICE SENSED A PRESENCE IN THE ROOM!
WHO'S THERE? SPEAK, CURSE YOU!
THE REPLY CAME BACK!
REMEMBER ME, VANASS? JANNO! I HAVE COME FOR MY VENGEANCE!
JANNO? AAAAAAAAH!

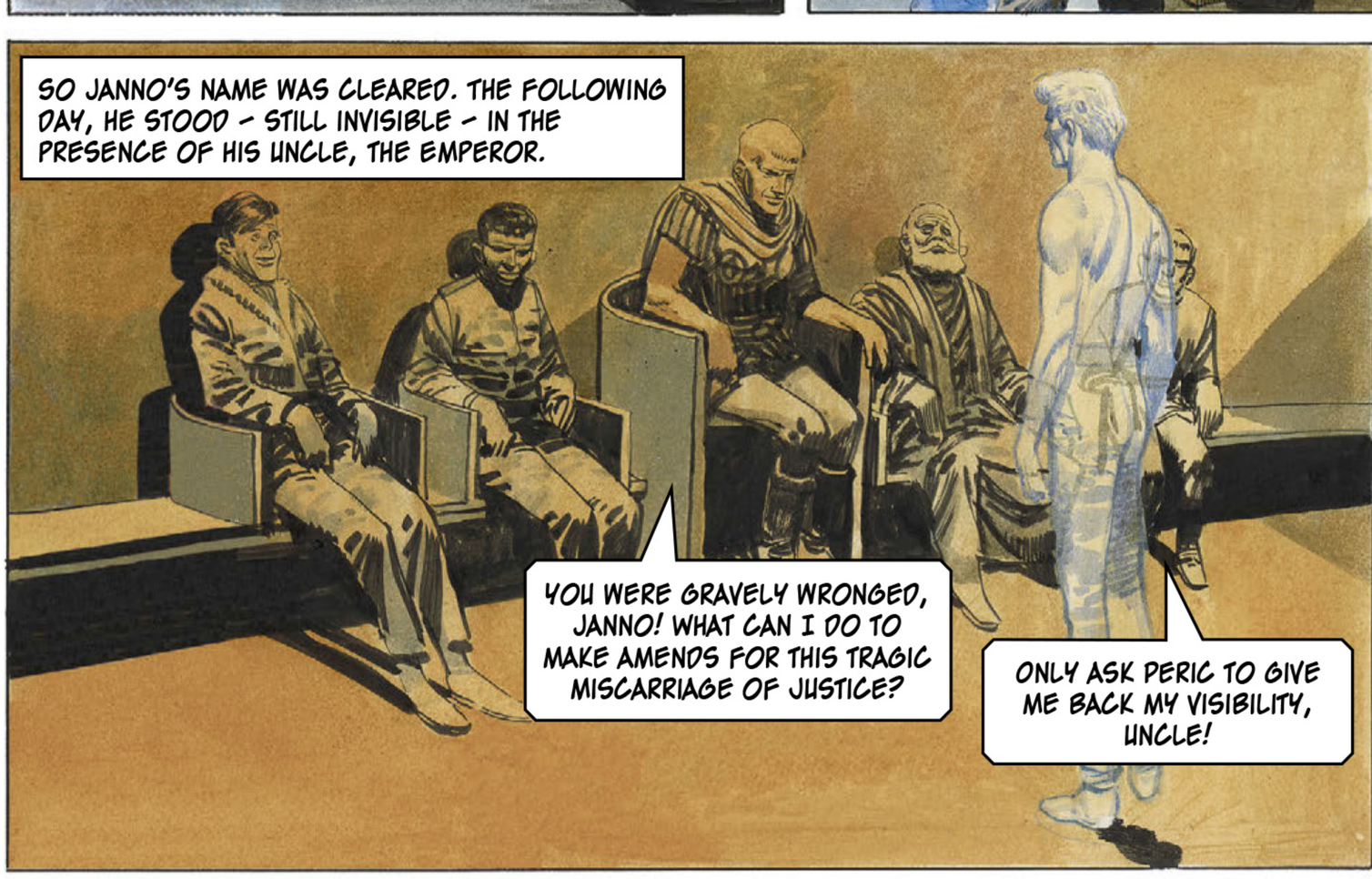
AS THE PROJECTILE ZIPPED FROM VANASS' GUN, THE INVISIBLE JANNO LEAPT FORWARD AND SENT THE EVIL POLICE CHIEF REELING WITH A SHATTERING BLOW!
EEEEAAAGH!

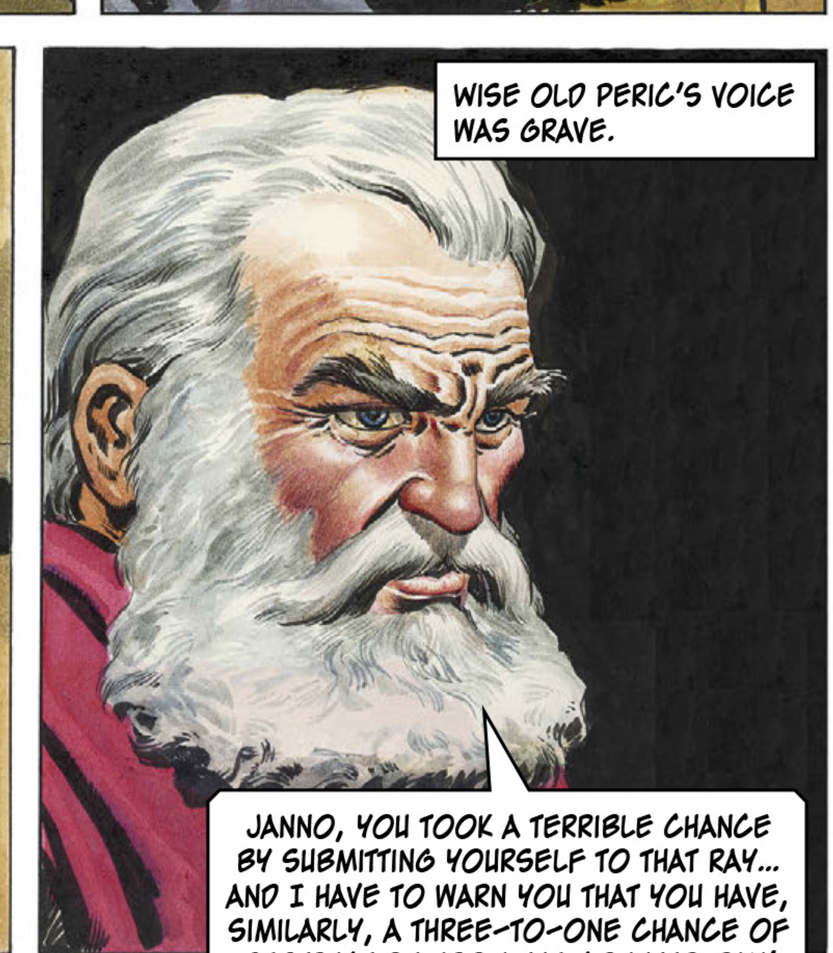
THE DIN BROUGHT POLICE TROOPERS RUNNING.
SPEAK, VANASS! CONFESS TO YOUR CRIMES!
BY THE STARS! WHAT AILS YOU, COLONEL?

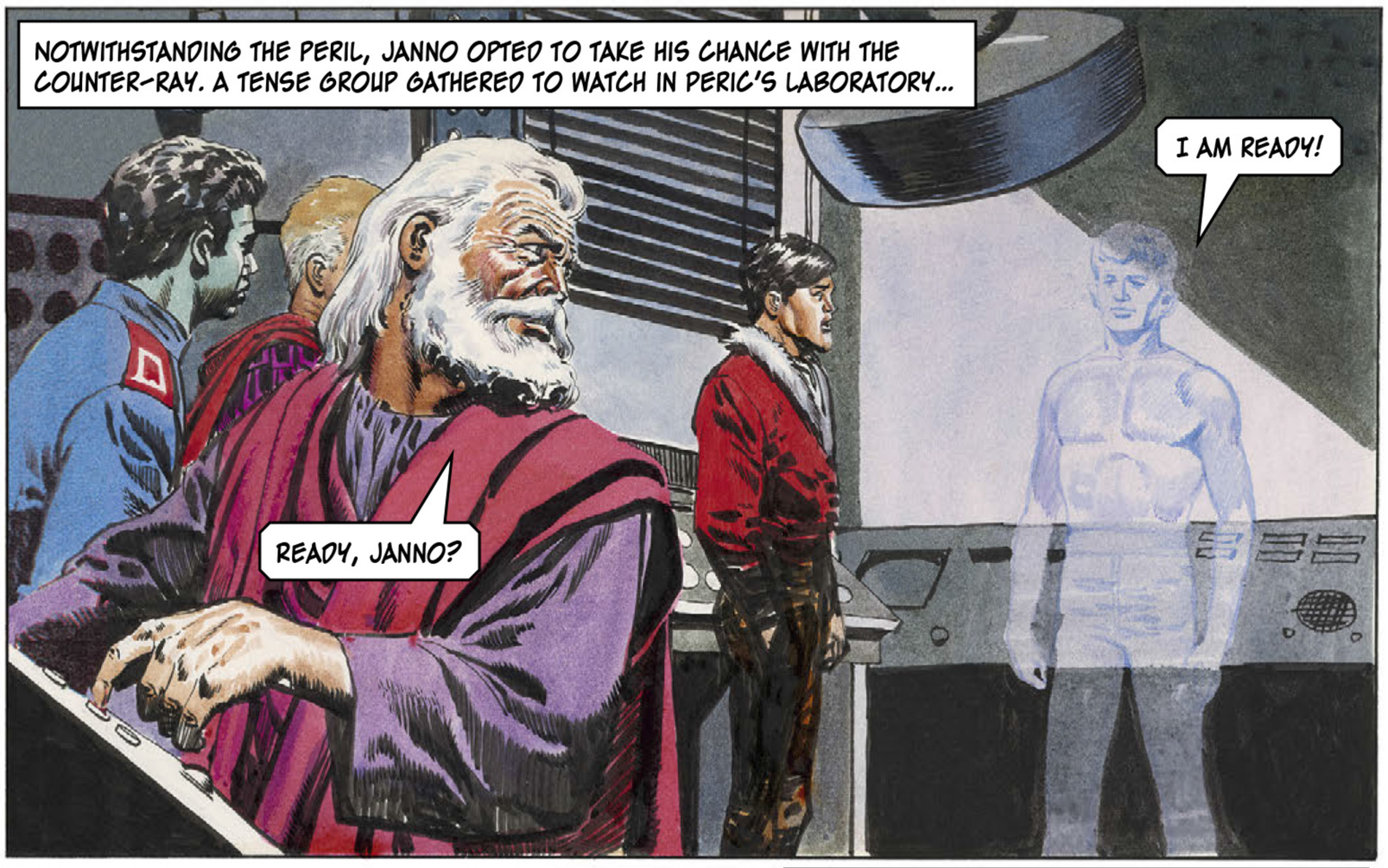

VANASS TOLD ALL...
IT- IT WAS I WHO MURDERED THE KEEPER OF THE SECRET ARCHIVES AND STOLE THE FILE... AND THEN I FORCED TWO WITNESSES TO SWEAR THAT IT WAS JANNO!

ONE LAST QUESTION FROM THE INVISIBLE JANNO...
THE FILE! WHAT DID YOU DO WITH IT?
IT IS HERE! I HAVE KEPT IT TO SELL TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER!

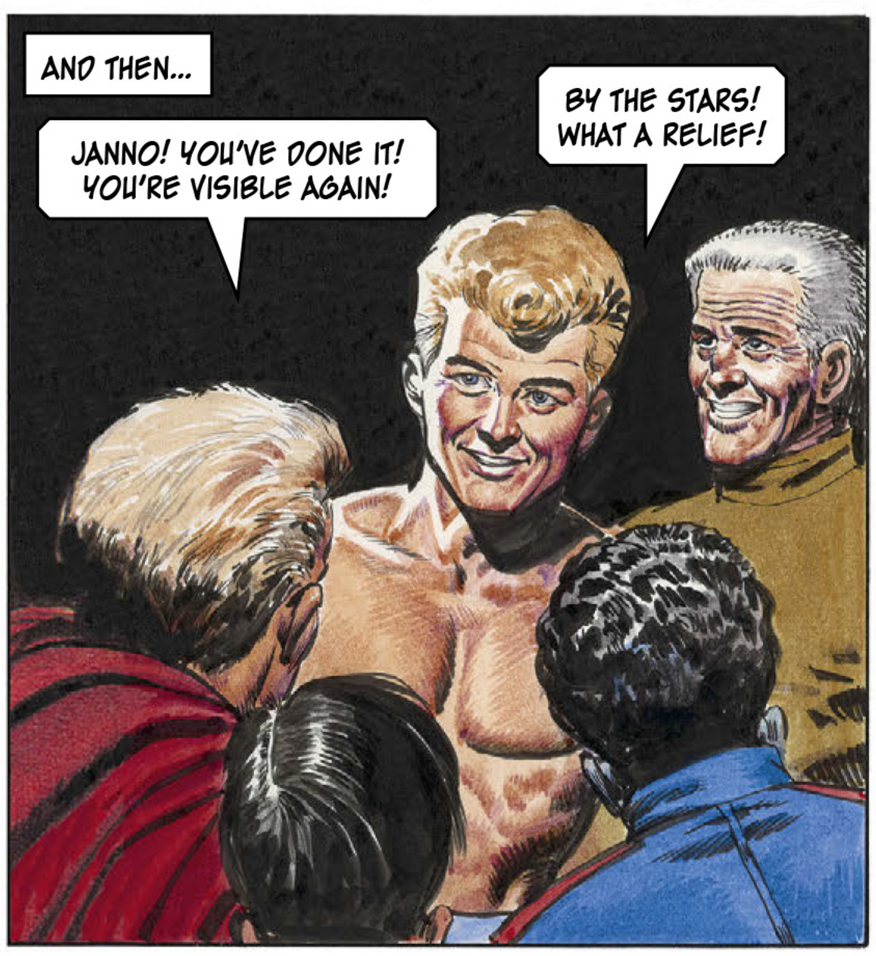
BUT THE TROOPERS HAD HEARD ALL THEY NEEDED TO KNOW...
COLONEL VANASS... YOU ARE UNDER ARREST! SEIZE HIM, MEN!


SO JANNO'S NAME WAS CLEARED. THE FOLLOWING DAY, HE STOOD - STILL INVISIBLE - IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS UNCLE, THE EMPEROR.
YOU WERE GRAVELY WRONGED, JANNO! WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE AMENDS FOR THIS TRAGIC MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE?
ONLY ASK PERIC TO GIVE ME BACK MY VISIBILITY, UNCLE!

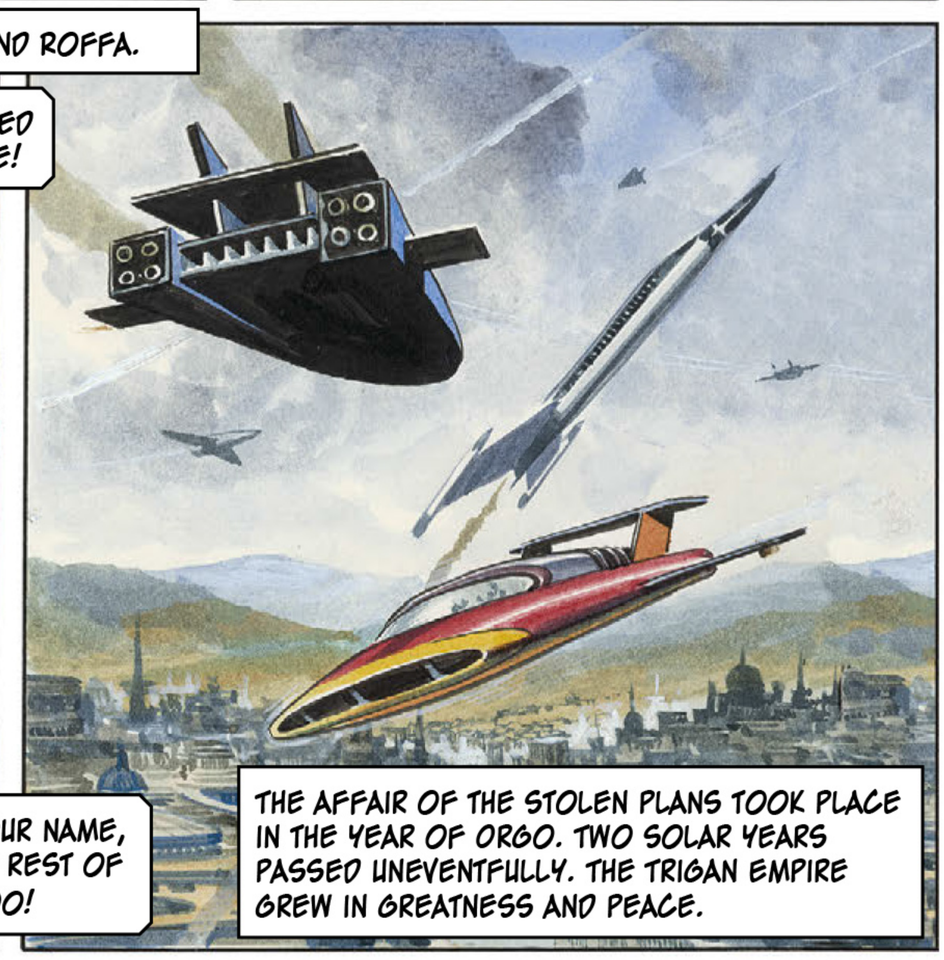

WISE OLD PERIC'S VOICE WAS GRAVE.
JANNO, YOU TOOK A TERRIBLE CHANCE BY SUBMITTING YOURSELF TO THAT RAY... AND I HAVE TO WARN YOU THAT YOU HAVE, SIMILARLY, A THREE-TO-ONE CHANCE OF DESTRUCTION FROM THE COUNTER-RAY!

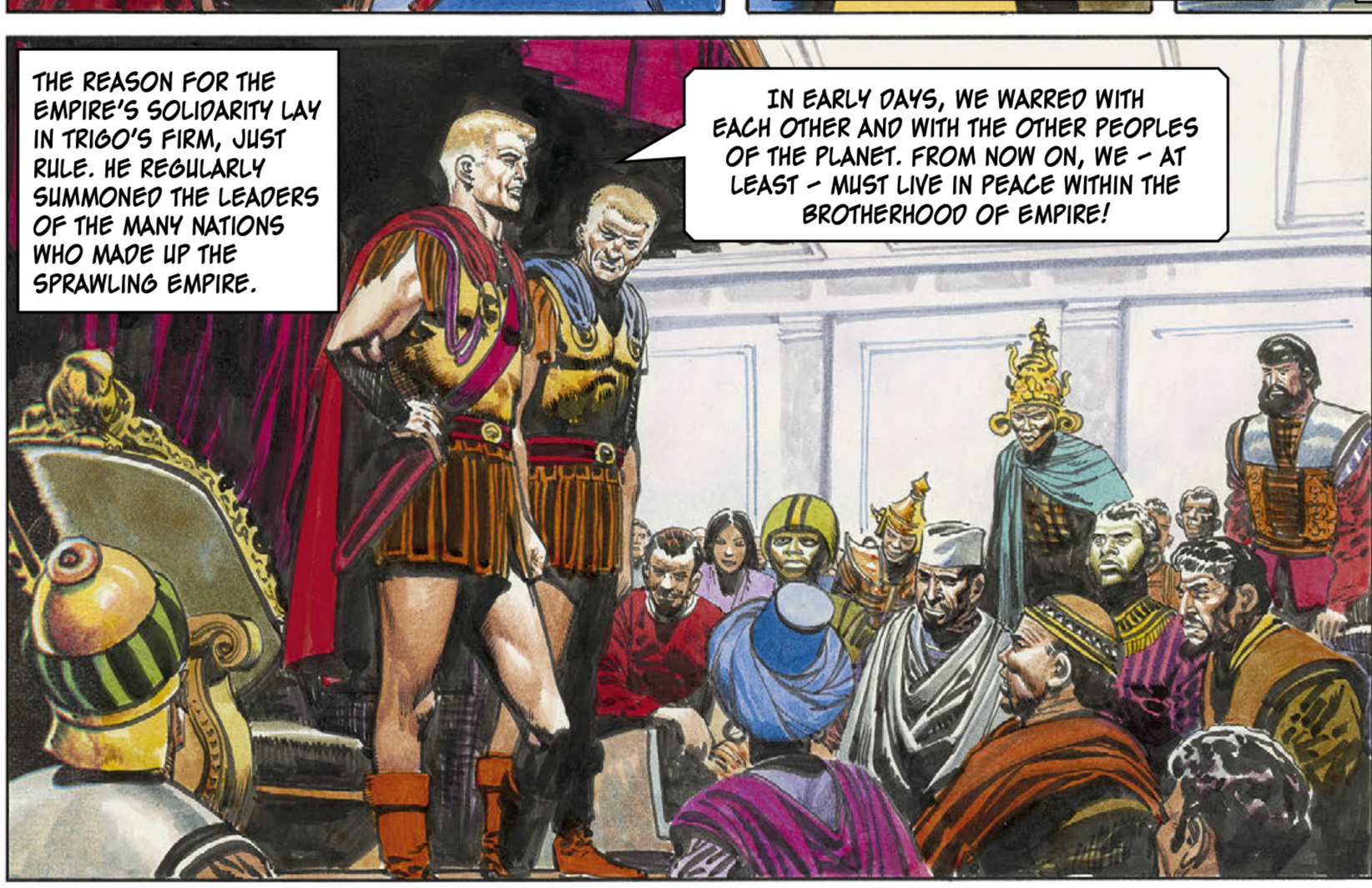

NOTWITHSTANDING THE PERIL, JANNO OPTED TO TAKE HIS CHANCE WITH THE COUNTER-RAY. A TENSE GROUP GATHERED TO WATCH IN PERIC'S LABORATORY...
I AM READY!
READY, JANNO?

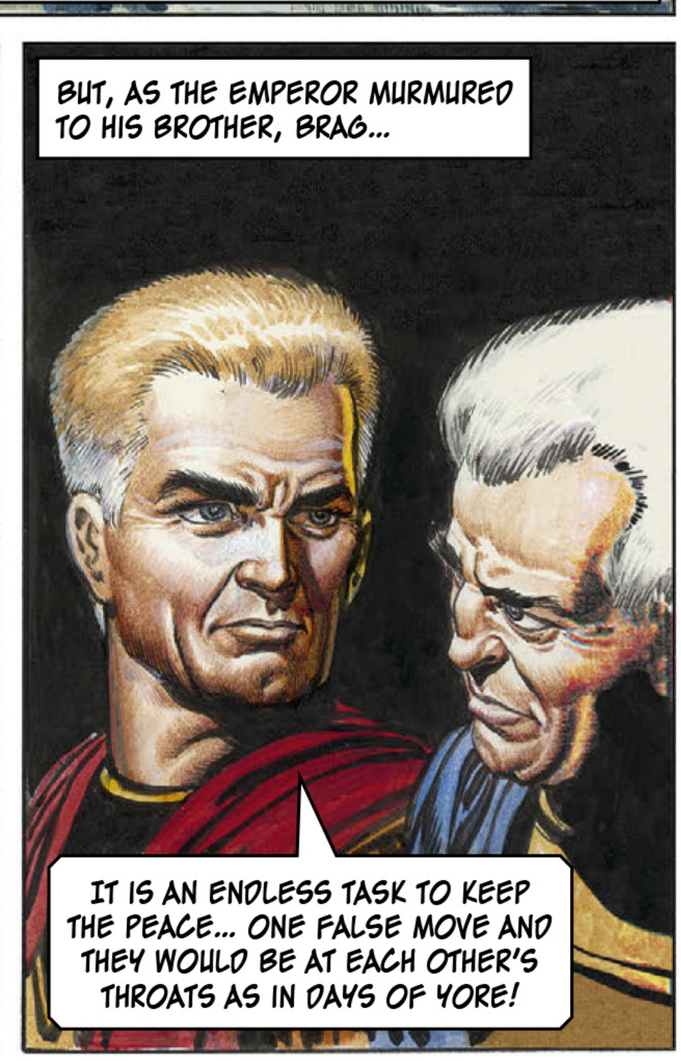
AN EERIE YELLOW LIGHT BURNED...
EEEAAAGH!

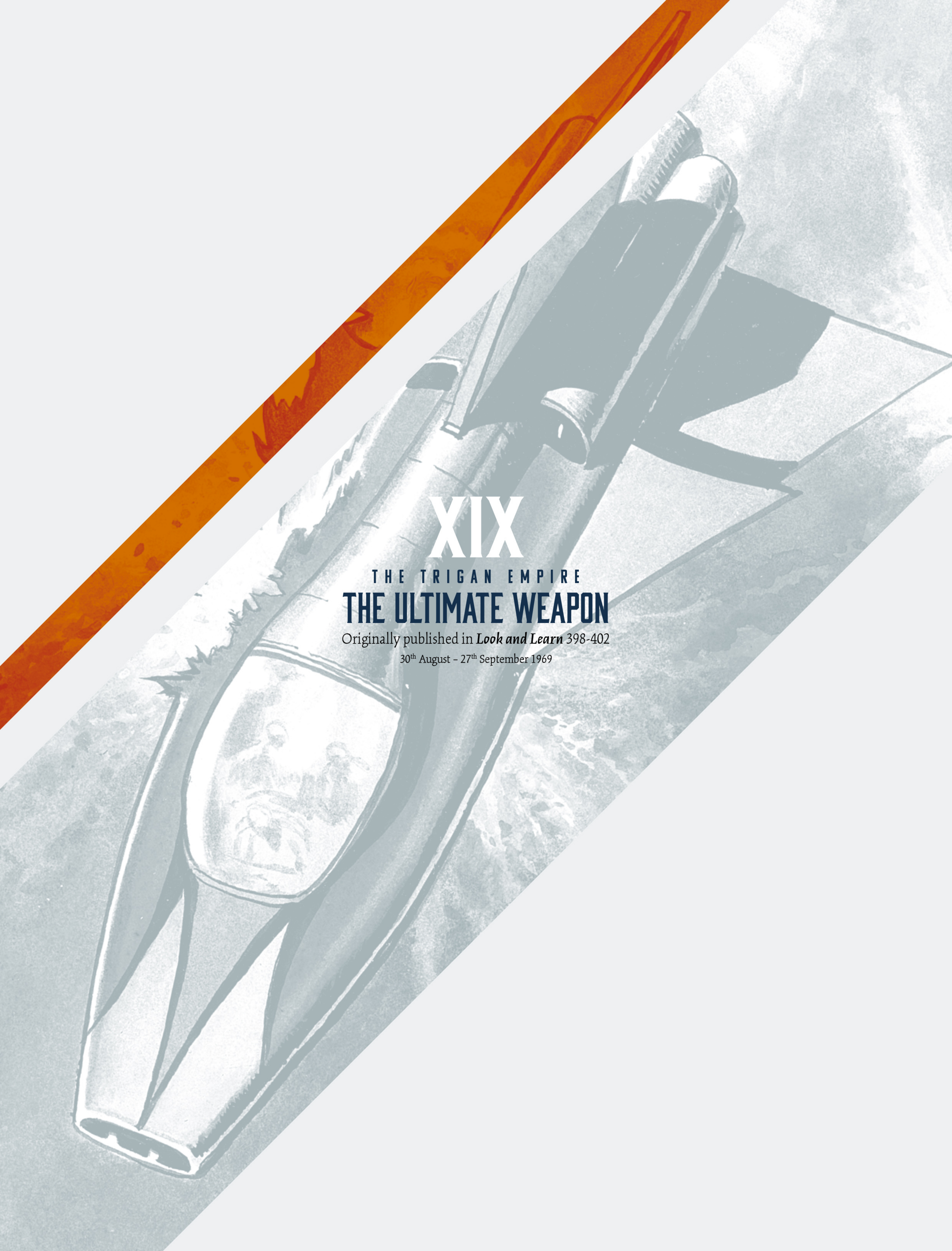

AND THEN...
JANNO! YOU'VE DONE IT! YOU'RE VISIBLE AGAIN!
BY THE STARS! WHAT A RELIEF!

HE CLASPED HANDS WITH HIS FRIEND ROFFA.
I OWE IT ALL TO YOU. YOU RISKED EVERYTHING TO LET ME ESCAPE!
I'M VERY GLAD YOU CLEARED YOUR NAME, JANNO... OR I'D HAVE SPENT THE REST OF MY LIFE IN THE MINES, TOO!


THE AFFAIR OF THE STOLEN PLANS TOOK PLACE IN THE YEAR OF ORGO. TWO SOLAR YEARS PASSED UNEVENTFULLY. THE TRIGAN EMPIRE GREW IN GREATNESS AND PEACE.


THE REASON FOR THE EMPIRE'S SOLIDARITY LAY IN TRIGO'S FIRM, JUST RULE. HE REGULARLY SUMMONED THE LEADERS OF THE MANY NATIONS WHO MADE UP THE SPRAWLING EMPIRE.
IN EARLY DAYS, WE WARRED WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE OTHER PEOPLES OF THE PLANET. FROM NOW ON, WE – AT LEAST – MUST LIVE IN PEACE WITHIN THE BROTHERHOOD OF EMPIRE!


BUT, AS THE EMPEROR MURMURED TO HIS BROTHER, BRAG...
IT IS AN ENDLESS TASK TO KEEP THE PEACE... ONE FALSE MOVE AND THEY WOULD BE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS AS IN DAYS OF YORE!



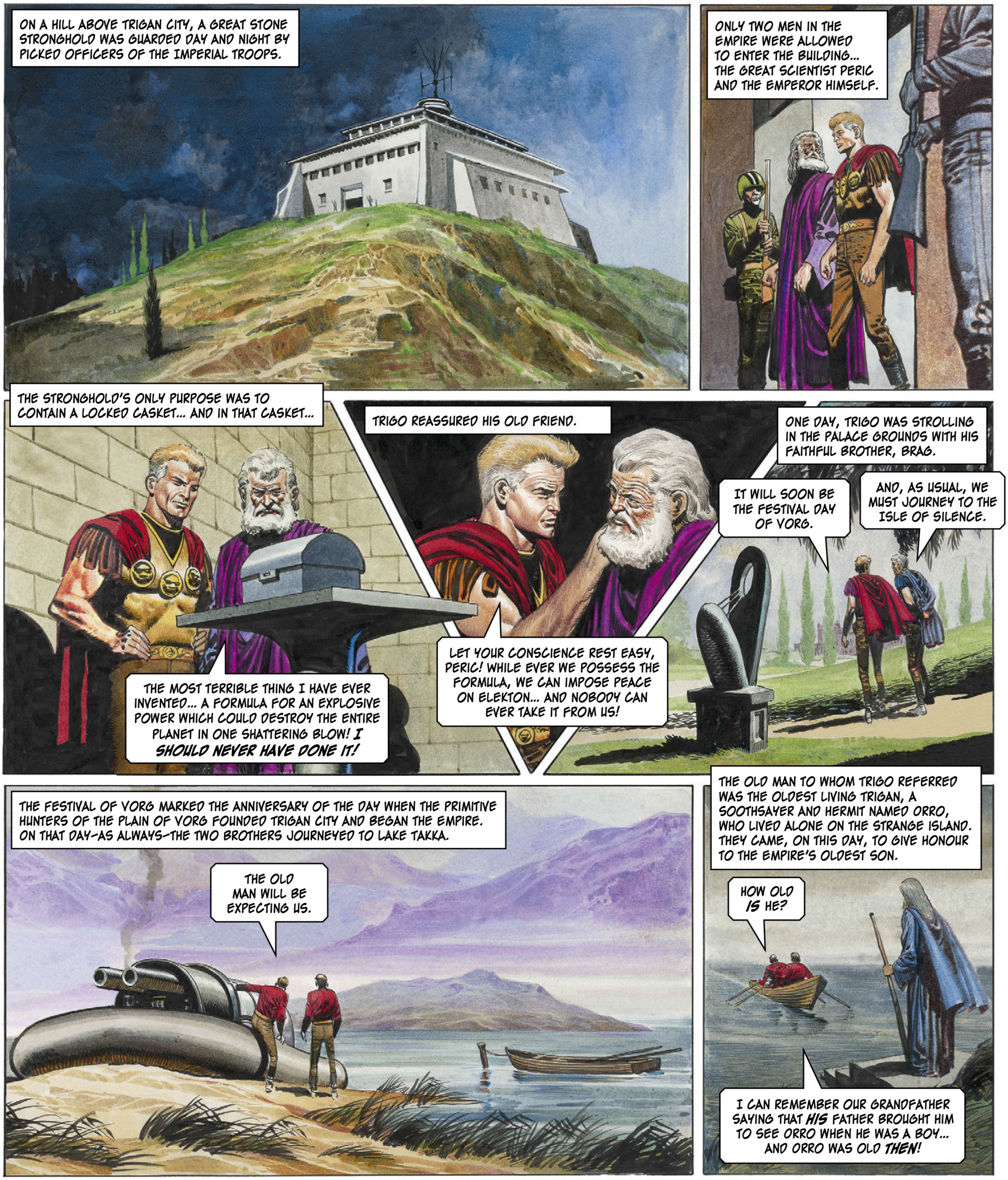
XIX

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

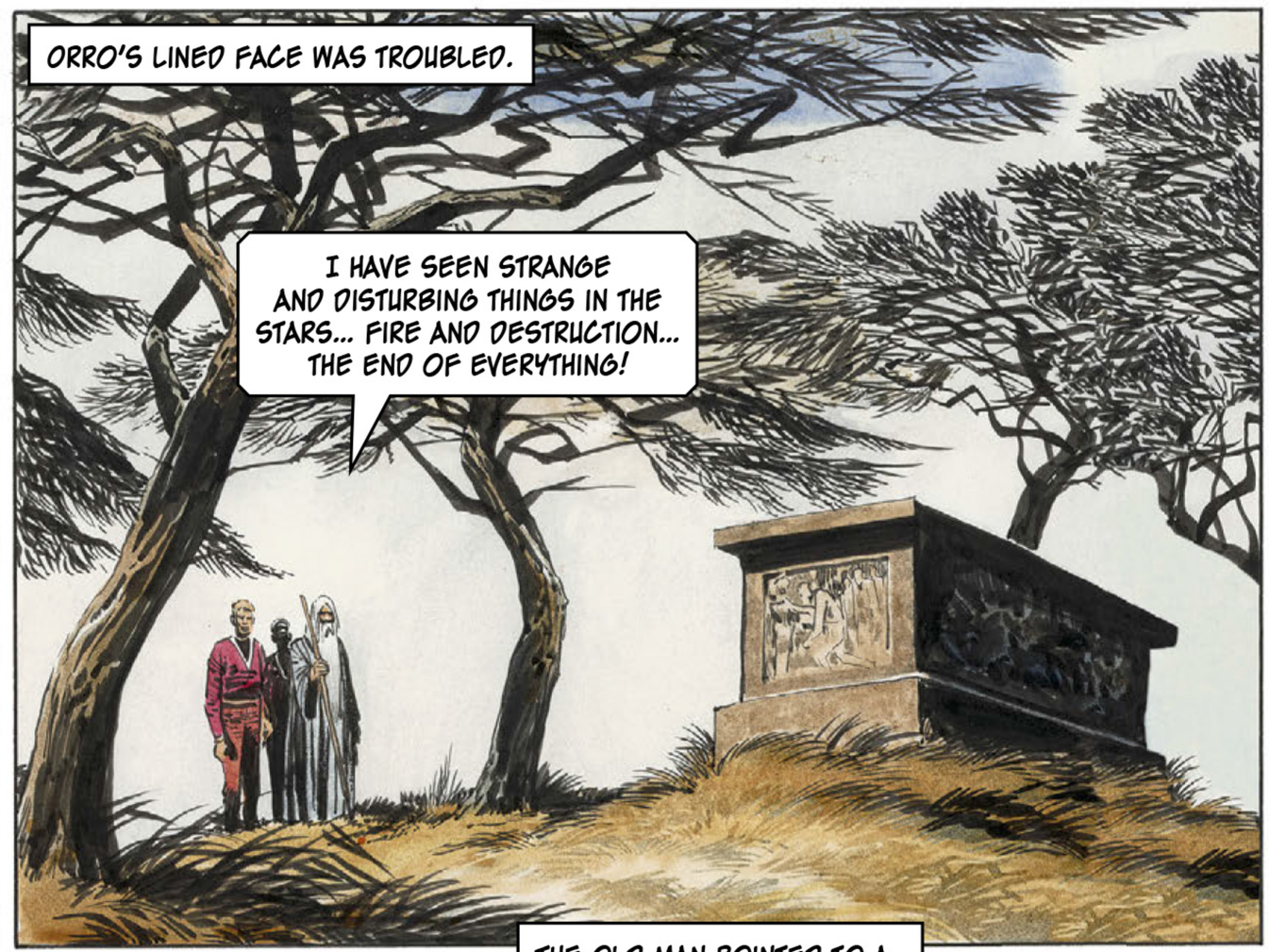
THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

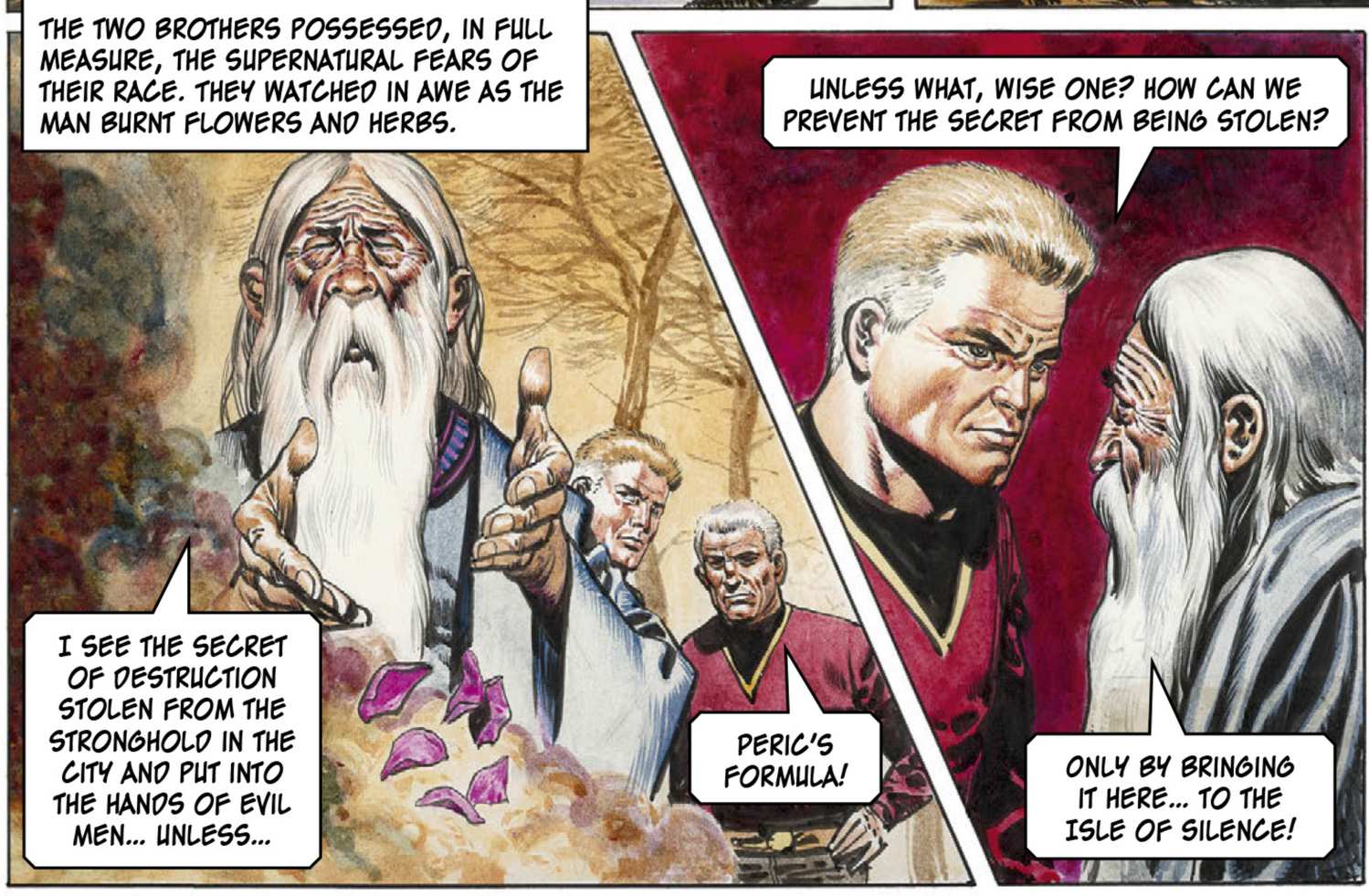
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 398-402

30th August – 27th September 1969

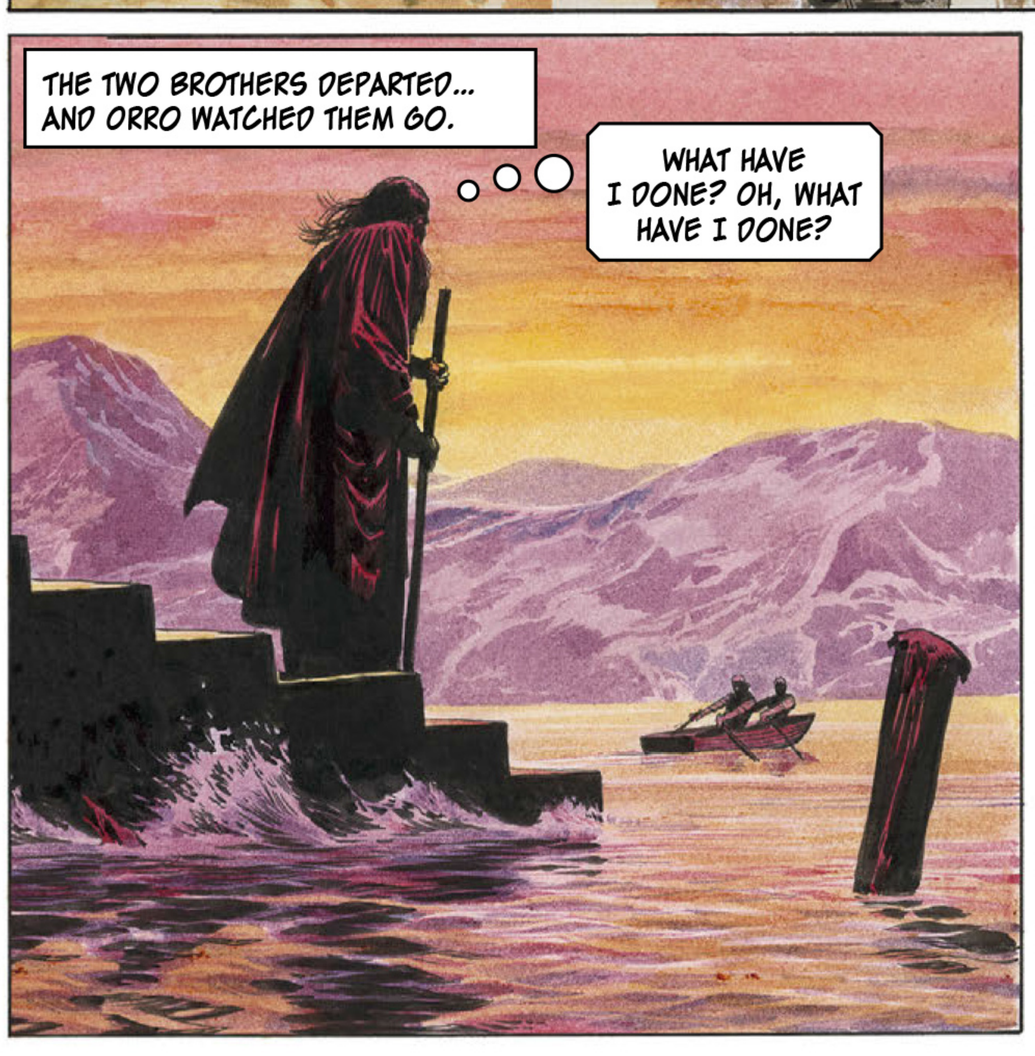

ON A HILL ABOVE TRIGAN CITY, A GREAT STONE STRONGHOLD WAS GUARDED DAY AND NIGHT BY PICKED OFFICERS OF THE IMPERIAL TROOPS.
ONLY TWO MEN IN THE EMPIRE WERE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE BUILDING... THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC AND THE EMPEROR HIMSELF.
THE STRONGHOLD'S ONLY PURPOSE WAS TO CONTAIN A LOCKED CASKET... AND IN THAT CASKET...
THE MOST TERRIBLE THING I HAVE EVER INVENTED... A FORMULA FOR AN EXPLOSIVE POWER WHICH COULD DESTROY THE ENTIRE PLANET IN ONE SHATTERING BLOW! I SHOULD NEVER HAVE DONE IT!
TRIGO REASSURED HIS OLD FRIEND.
LET YOUR CONSCIENCE REST EASY, PERIC! WHILE EVER WE POSSESS THE FORMULA, WE CAN IMPOSE PEACE ON ELEKTON... AND NOBODY CAN EVER TAKE IT FROM US!
ONE DAY, TRIGO WAS STROLLING IN THE PALACE GROUNDS WITH HIS FAITHFUL BROTHER, BRAG.
IT WILL SOON BE THE FESTIVAL DAY OF VORG.
AND, AS USUAL, WE MUST JOURNEY TO THE ISLE OF SILENCE.
THE FESTIVAL OF VORG MARKED THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DAY WHEN THE PRIMITIVE HUNTERS OF THE PLAIN OF VORG FOUNDED TRIGAN CITY AND BEGAN THE EMPIRE. ON THAT DAY—AS ALWAYS—THE TWO BROTHERS JOURNEYED TO LAKE TAKKA.
THE OLD MAN WILL BE EXPECTING US.
THE OLD MAN TO WHOM TRIGO REFERRED WAS THE OLDEST LIVING TRIGAN, A SOOTHSAYER AND HERMIT NAMED ORRO, WHO LIVED ALONE ON THE STRANGE ISLAND. THEY CAME, ON THIS DAY, TO GIVE HONOUR TO THE EMPIRE'S OLDEST SON.
HOW OLD IS HE?
I CAN REMEMBER OUR GRANDFATHER SAYING THAT HIS FATHER BROUGHT HIM TO SEE ORRO WHEN HE WAS A BOY... AND ORRO WAS OLD THEN!

THEY WERE MET BY THE ANCIENT INHABITANT OF THE ISLE OF SILENCE.
GREETINGS, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. GREETINGS, MY LORD. YOU DO ME A GREAT HONOUR.
I TRUST WE FIND YOU IN GOOD HEALTH, WISE ONE.


ORRO'S LINED FACE WAS TROUBLED.
I HAVE SEEN STRANGE AND DISTURBING THINGS IN THE STARS... FIRE AND DESTRUCTION... THE END OF EVERYTHING!


THE TWO BROTHERS POSSESSED, IN FULL MEASURE, THE SUPERNATURAL FEARS OF THEIR RACE. THEY WATCHED IN AWE AS THE MAN BURNT FLOWERS AND HERBS.
I SEE THE SECRET OF DESTRUCTION STOLEN FROM THE STRONGHOLD IN THE CITY AND PUT INTO THE HANDS OF EVIL MEN... UNLESS...
PERIC'S FORMULA!
UNLESS WHAT, WISE ONE? HOW CAN WE PREVENT THE SECRET FROM BEING STOLEN?
ONLY BY BRINGING IT HERE... TO THE ISLE OF SILENCE!

THE OLD MAN POINTED TO A HOLE IN THE ROCKY GROUND.
THE SECRET MUST BE PLACED IN THAT DEEP SHAFT AND SEALED WITH THE GREAT STONE! ONLY THEN WILL ALL BE WELL!
IT SHALL BE DONE! WE WILL RETURN AT ONCE TO THE CITY AND BRING IT HERE!


THE TWO BROTHERS DEPARTED... AND ORRO WATCHED THEM GO.
WHAT HAVE I DONE? OH, WHAT HAVE I DONE?

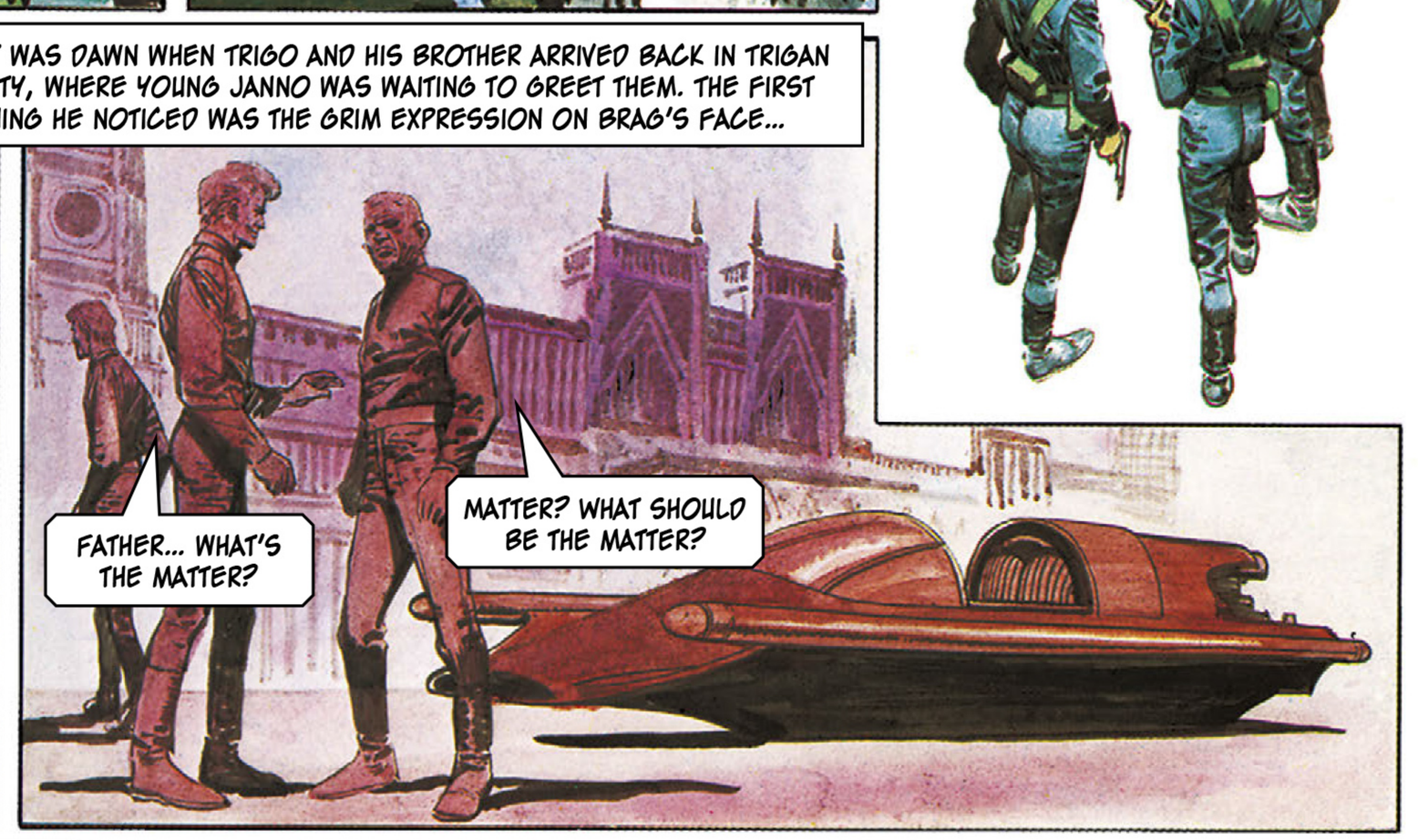
HE WAS NOT ALONE ON THE ISLAND. A GROUP OF MEN CAME OUT FROM AMONG THE TREES.
YOU DID WELL, OLD FOOL! IF YOU HAD FAILED US, THE THREE OF YOU WOULD HAVE PERISHED INSTANTLY!

THE OLD SOOTHSAYER STARED IN ANGUISH AT THE SIX MEN.
WHAT HAVE YOU MADE ME DO? WHY DO YOU WISH TO LAY YOUR HANDS ON THE DREAD SECRET?

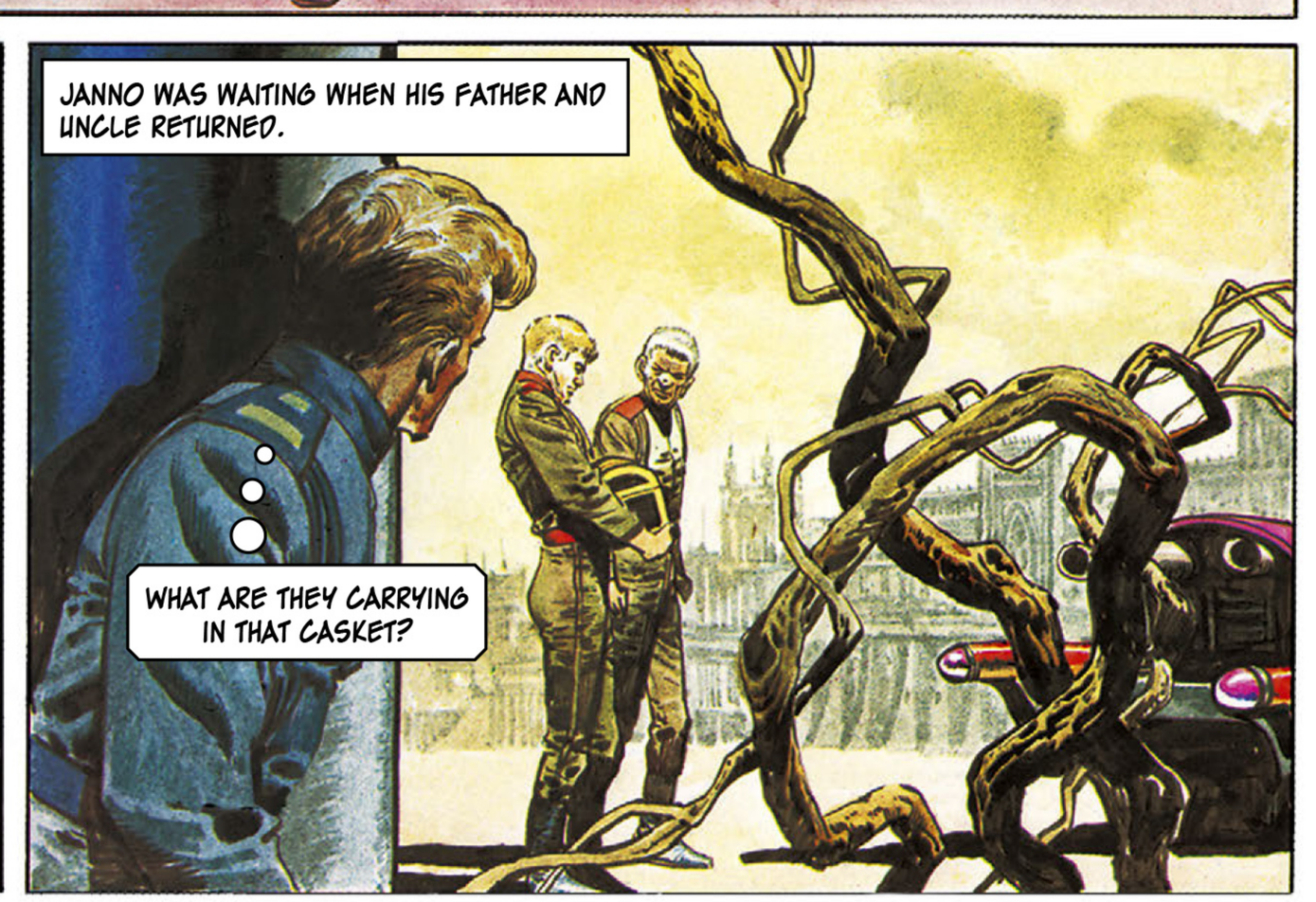
THE MEN WERE LOKANS... MEMBERS OF A FIGHTING RACE WHO HAD BEEN DEFEATED BY THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
ONCE WE WERE THE TERROR OF ELEKTON... TILL THE ACCURSED TRIGO CAST OUT OUR KING AND MADE US HIS VASSALS! BUT NOW OUR DAY WILL COME AGAIN!
NO! NO!

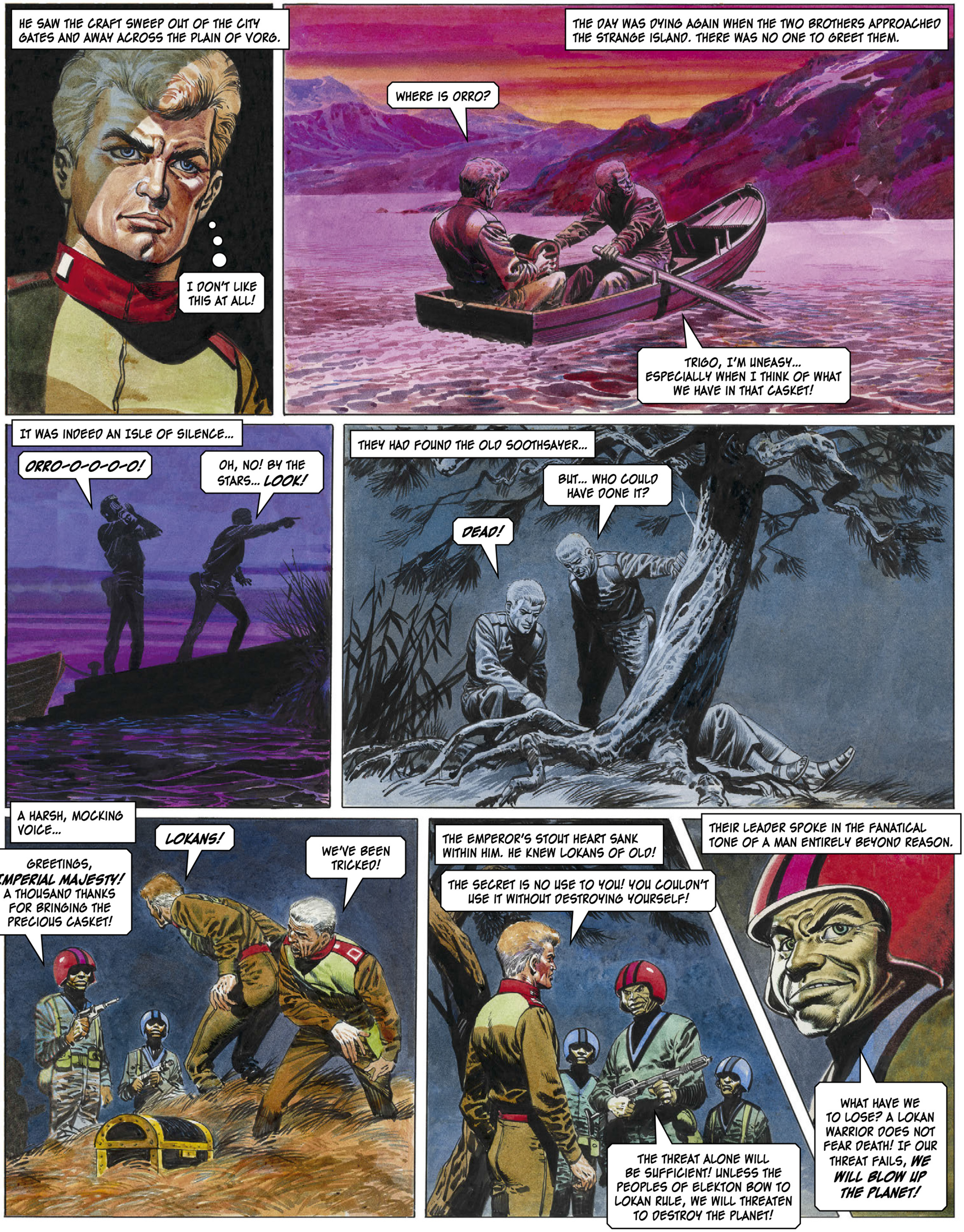
NO LONGER DID ORRO NEED TO BE TOLD WHAT THAT HANDFUL OF DESPERATE MEN INTENDED TO DO WITH THE SECRET THAT COULD DESTROY THE PLANET!
IF YOU BRING DESTRUCTION TO THE PEOPLES OF ELEKTON, YOUR NAMES WILL BE ACCURSED FOREVER MORE! THE VERY STARS WILL TURN IN THEIR COURSES AND DESCEND UPON YOU! YOU ARE EVIL... EVIL!

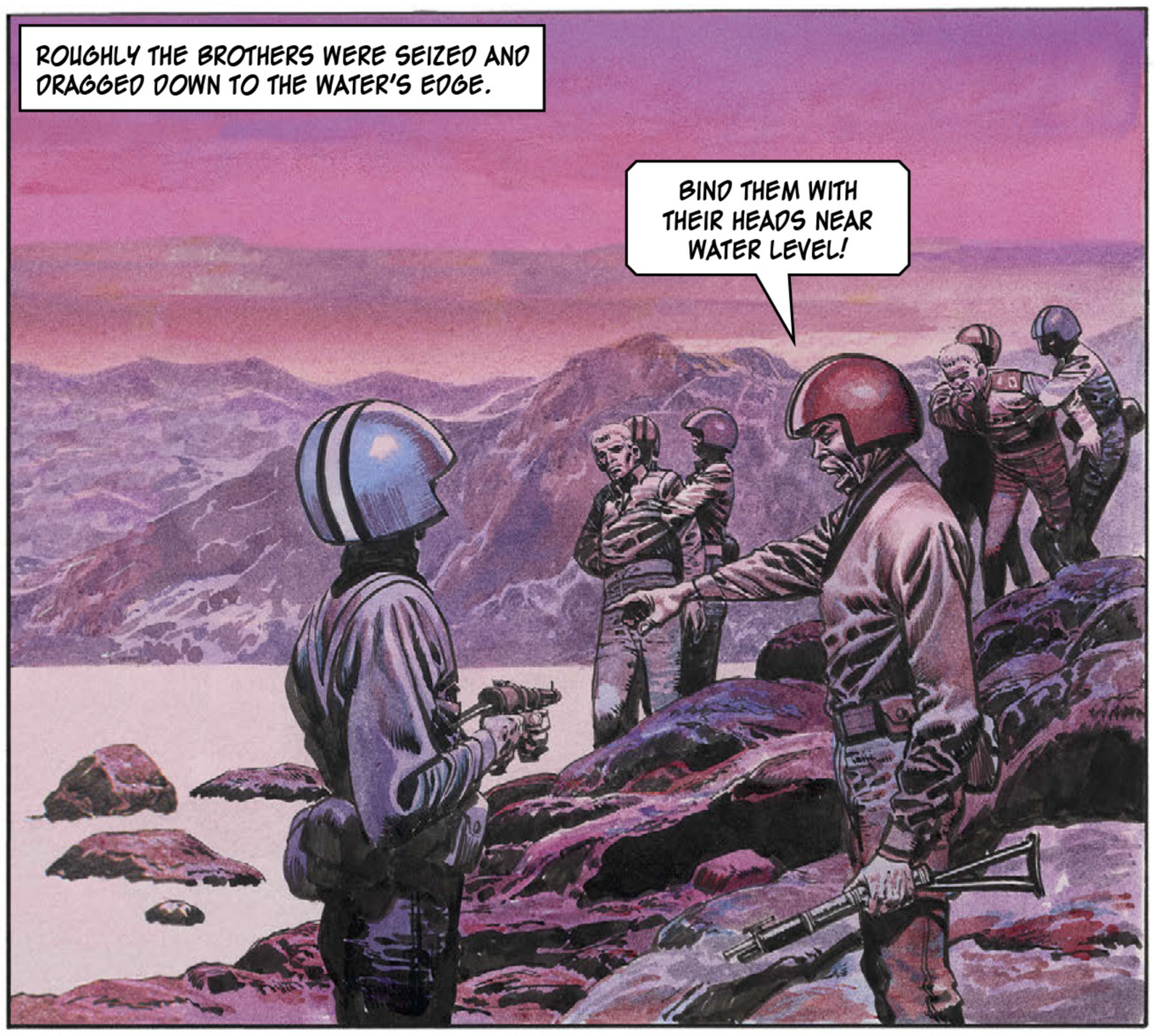
DESTROY THE OLD FOOL! HE IS OF NO FURTHER USE TO US!


IT WAS DAWN WHEN TRIGO AND HIS BROTHER ARRIVED BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, WHERE YOUNG JANNO WAS WAITING TO GREET THEM. THE FIRST THING HE NOTICED WAS THE GRIM EXPRESSION ON BRAG'S FACE...
FATHER... WHAT'S THE MATTER?
MATTER? WHAT SHOULD BE THE MATTER?

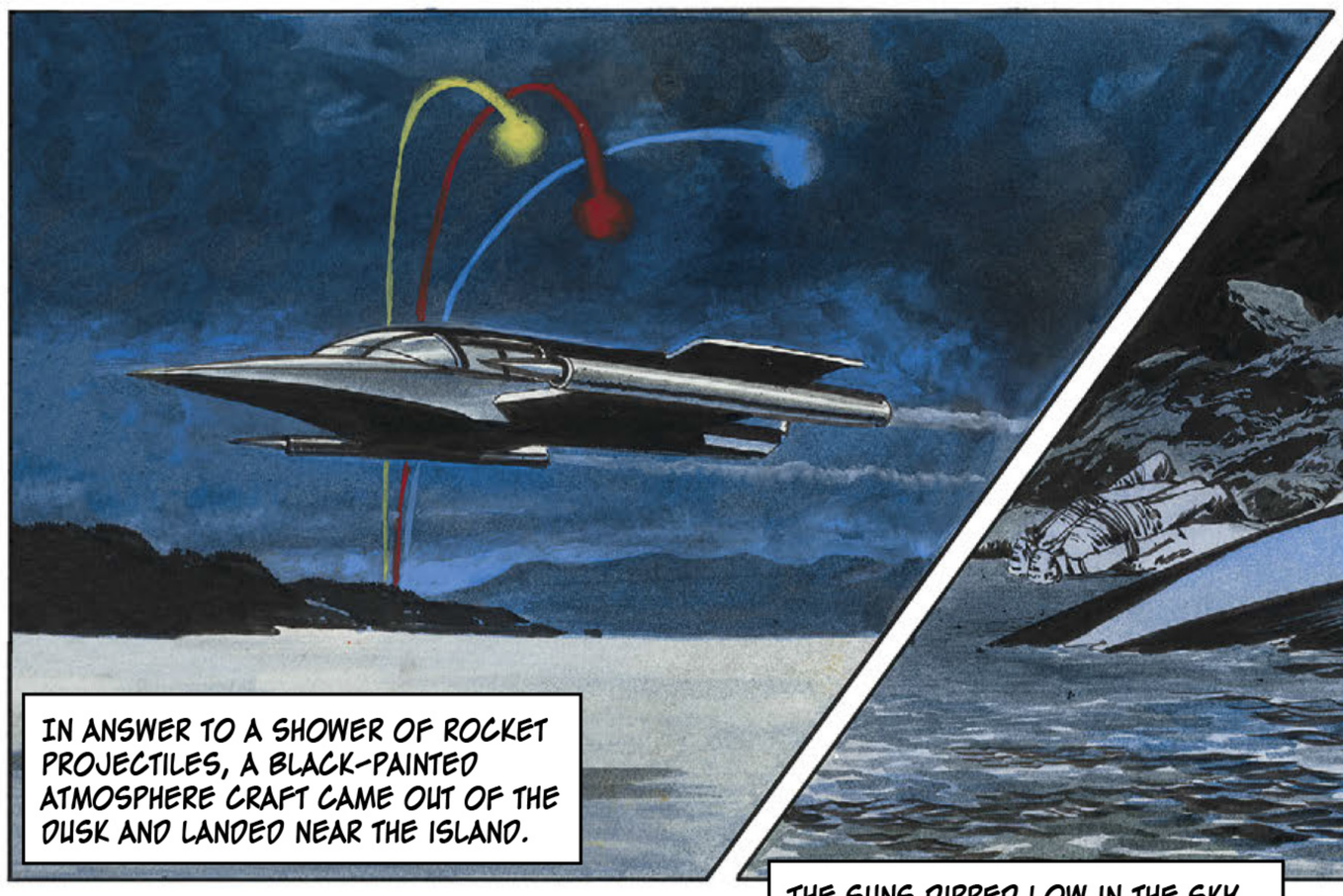
ALREADY THE TASK BEFORE THEM WAS CAUSING GRAVE DOUBTS IN BRAG'S MIND. HE SNAPPED ANGRILY AT HIS SON.
COME ON, BRAG!
WE HAVE TO RETURN TO THE ISLE OF SILENCE... AND JUST YOU KEEP THAT INFORMATION TO YOURSELF, MY LAD!

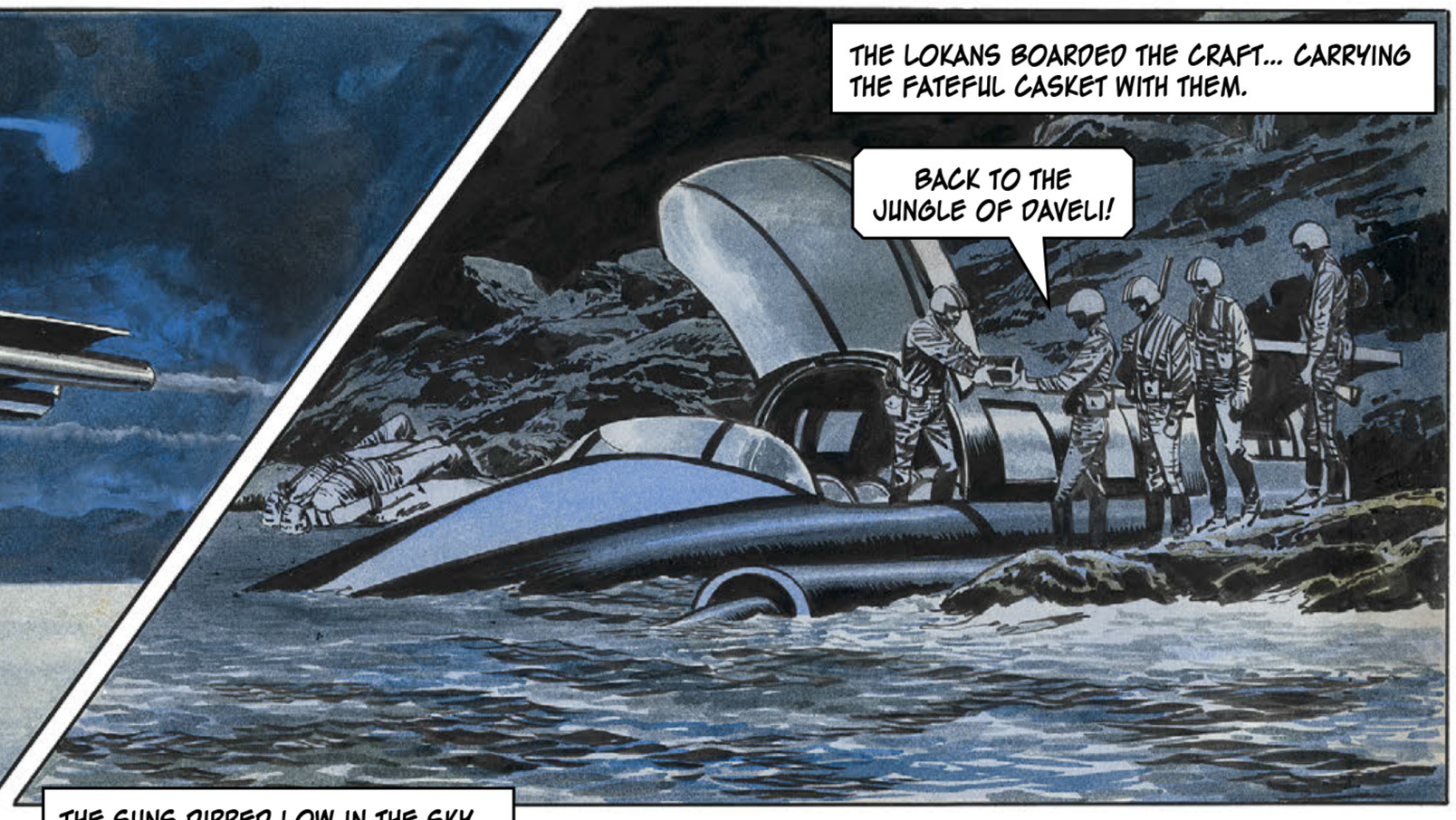

JANNO WAS WAITING WHEN HIS FATHER AND UNCLE RETURNED.
WHAT ARE THEY CARRYING IN THAT CASKET?

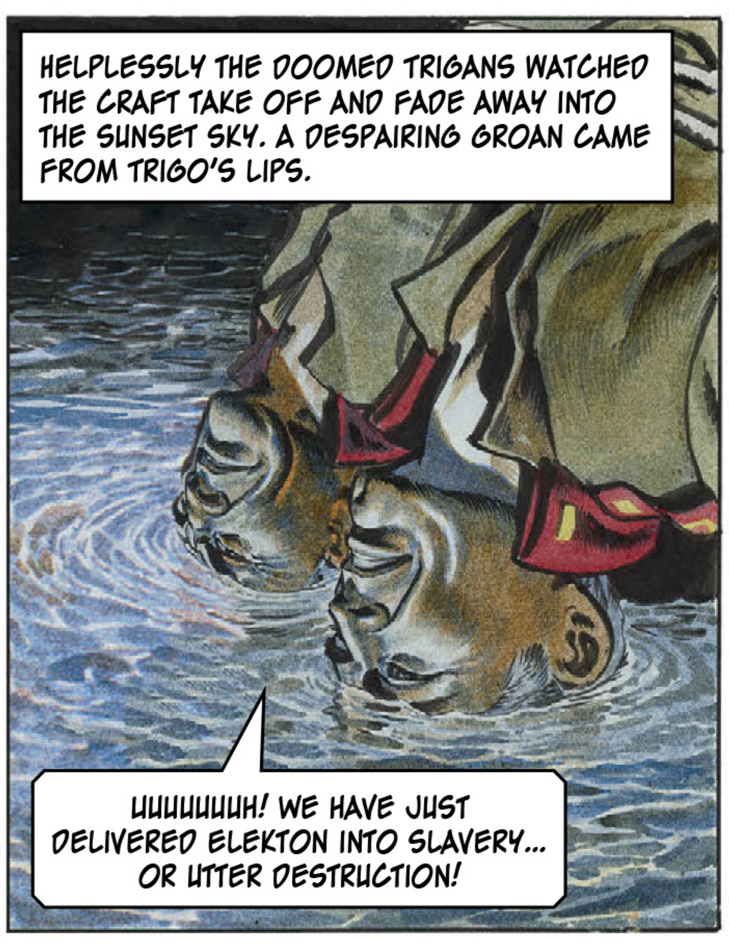

HE SAW THE CRAFT SWEEP OUT OF THE CITY GATES AND AWAY ACROSS THE PLAIN OF VORG.
I DON'T LIKE THIS AT ALL!
THE DAY WAS DYING AGAIN WHEN THE TWO BROTHERS APPROACHED THE STRANGE ISLAND. THERE WAS NO ONE TO GREET THEM.
WHERE IS ORRO?
TRIGO, I'M UNEASY... ESPECIALLY WHEN I THINK OF WHAT WE HAVE IN THAT CASKET!
IT WAS INDEED AN ISLE OF SILENCE...
ORRO-O-O-O-O!
OH, NO! BY THE STARS... LOOK!
THEY HAD FOUND THE OLD SOOTHSAYER...
BUT... WHO COULD HAVE DONE IT?
DEAD!
A HARSH, MOCKING VOICE...
GREETINGS, IMPERIAL MAJESTY! A THOUSAND THANKS FOR BRINGING THE PRECIOUS CASKET!
LOKANS!
WE'VE BEEN TRICKED!
THE EMPEROR'S STOUT HEART SANK WITHIN HIM. HE KNEW LOKANS OF OLD!
THE SECRET IS NO USE TO YOU! YOU COULDN'T USE IT WITHOUT DESTROYING YOURSELF!
THE THREAT ALONE WILL BE SUFFICIENT! UNLESS THE PEOPLES OF ELEKTON BOW TO LOKAN RULE, WE WILL THREATEN TO DESTROY THE PLANET!
THEIR LEADER SPOKE IN THE FANATICAL TONE OF A MAN ENTIRELY BEYOND REASON.
WHAT HAVE WE TO LOSE? A LOKAN WARRIOR DOES NOT FEAR DEATH! IF OUR THREAT FAILS, WE WILL BLOW UP THE PLANET!


ROUGHLY THE BROTHERS WERE SEIZED AND DRAGGED DOWN TO THE WATER'S EDGE.
BIND THEM WITH THEIR HEADS NEAR WATER LEVEL!

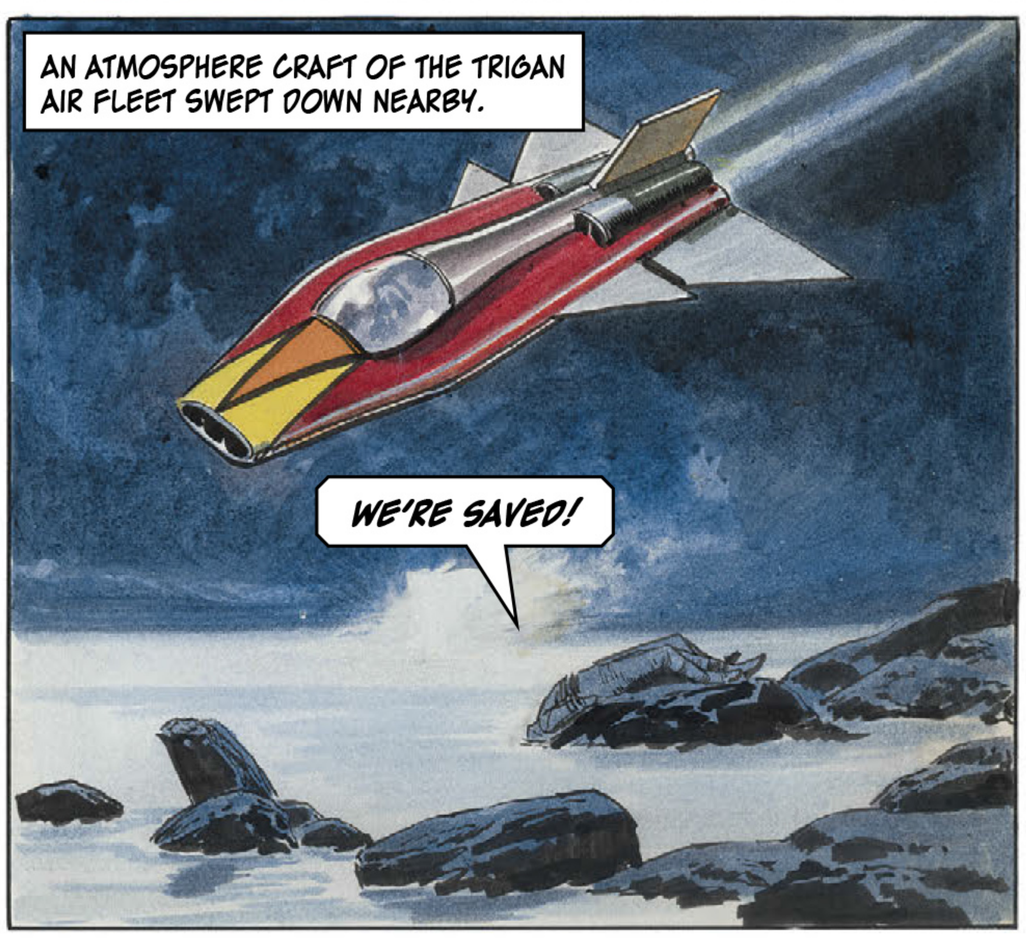
THEY WERE TIED ACROSS THE COLD ROCKS, WITH THEIR HEADS HANGING LOW.
THE LAKE IS FED BY A SUBTERRANEAN SEA. WITHIN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME, THE TIDE WILL RISE AND YOU WILL BE DESTROYED!


IN ANSWER TO A SHOWER OF ROCKET PROJECTILES, A BLACK-PAINTED ATMOSPHERE CRAFT CAME OUT OF THE DUSK AND LANDED NEAR THE ISLAND.

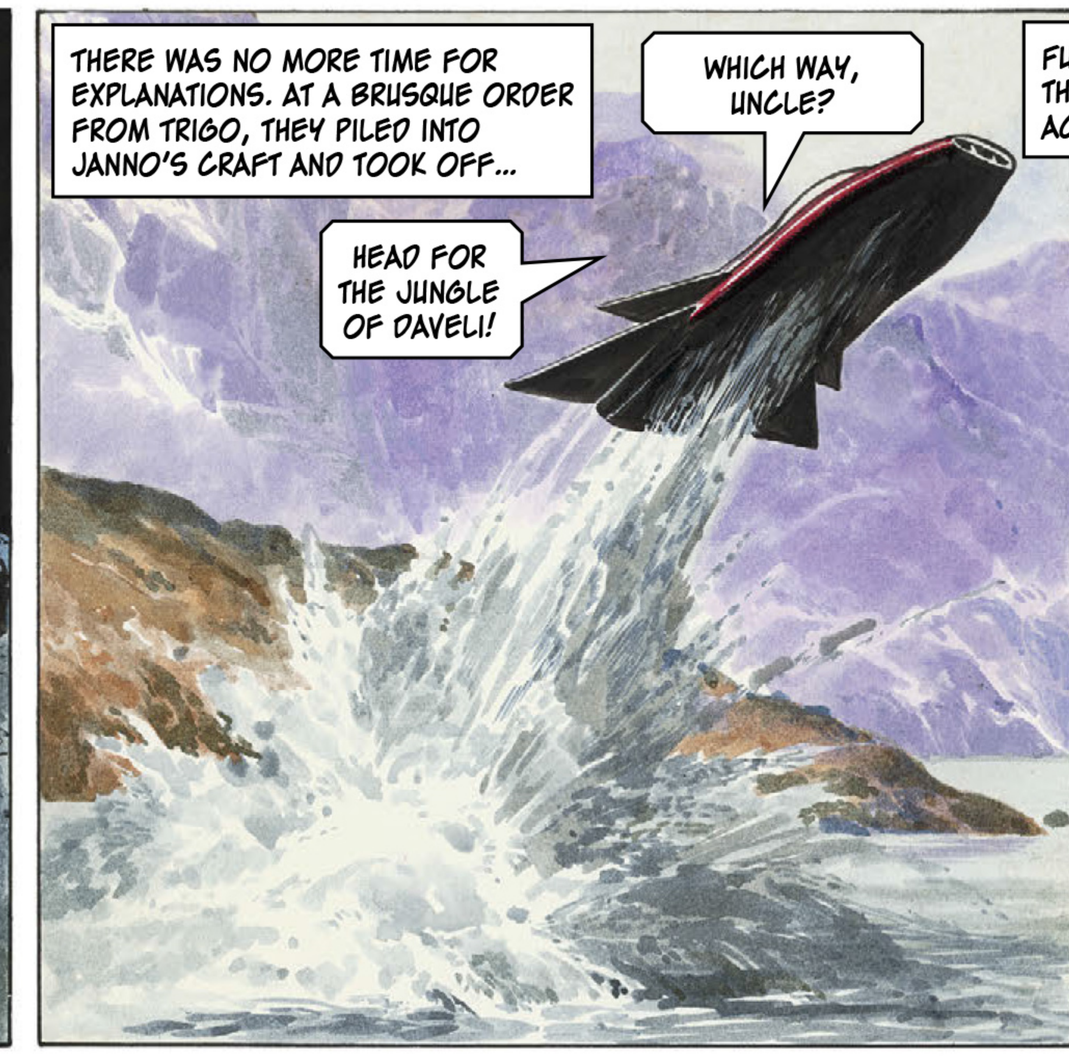

THE LOKANS BOARDED THE CRAFT... CARRYING THE FATEFUL CASKET WITH THEM.
BACK TO THE JUNGLE OF DAVELI!


HELPLESSLY THE DOOMED TRIGANS WATCHED THE CRAFT TAKE OFF AND FADE AWAY INTO THE SUNSET SKY. A DESPAIRING GROAN CAME FROM TRIGO'S LIPS.
UUUUUUUUH! WE HAVE JUST DELIVERED ELEKTON INTO SLAVERY... OR UTTER DESTRUCTION!

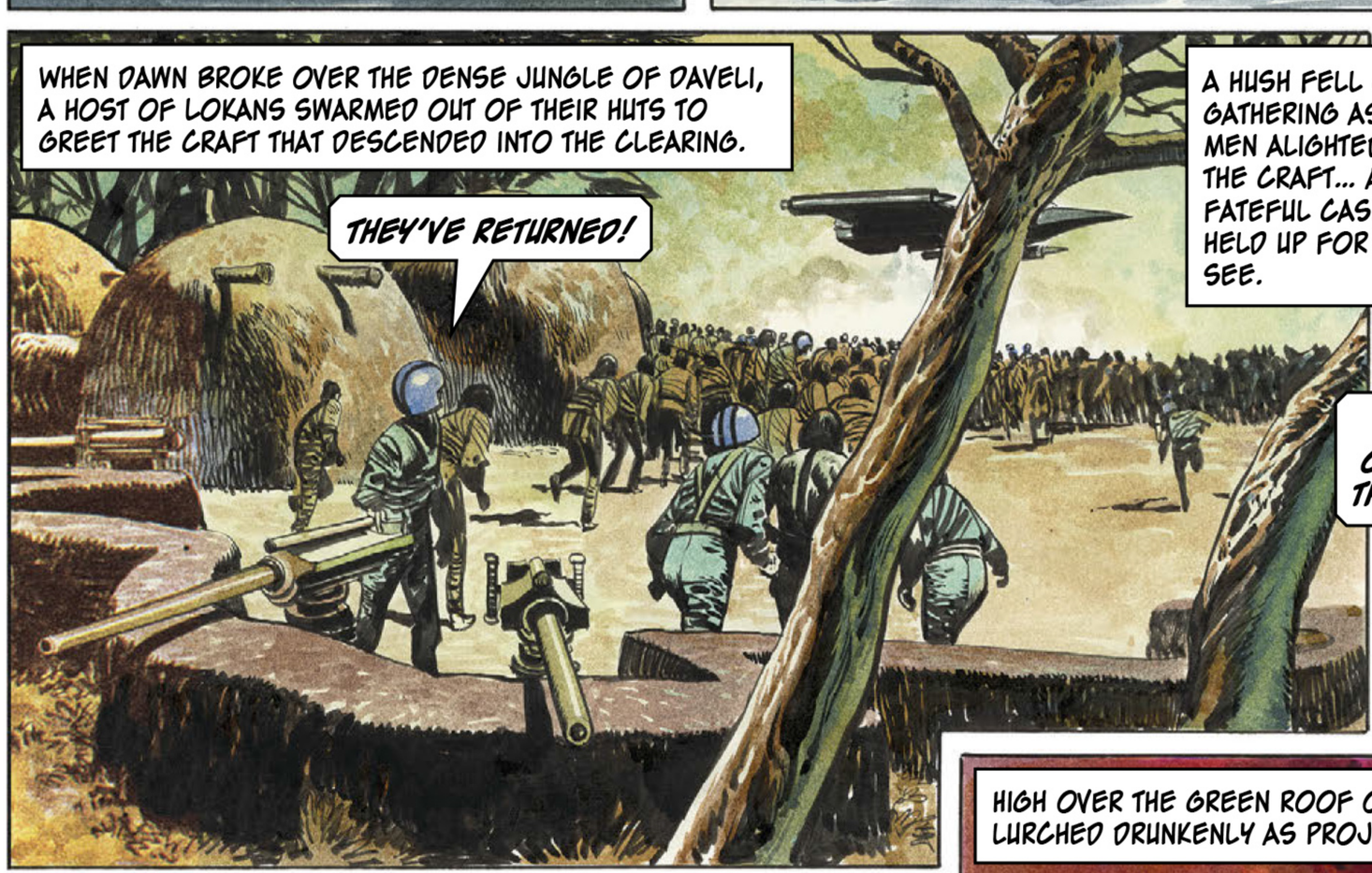
THE SUNS DIPPED LOW IN THE SKY AND THE TWIN MOONS OF ELEKTON LIT THE NIGHT BRIGHTLY AS DAY. SLOWLY BUT STEADILY, THE WATERS ROSE. AND THEN...
BRAG! I CAN HEAR THE SOUND OF ENGINES!


AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET SWEPT DOWN NEARBY.
WE'RE SAVED!

IT WAS YOUNG JANNO WHO SLICED THROUGH THE BONDS BINDING HIS FATHER AND UNCLE.
BUT... WHY DID YOU FOLLOW US HERE?
I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG FROM YOUR ATTITUDE, FATHER... SO I RISKED YOUR DISPLEASURE AND CAME AFTER YOU... THANK THE STARS!


THERE WAS NO MORE TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS. AT A BRUSQUE ORDER FROM TRIGO, THEY PILED INTO JANNO'S CRAFT AND TOOK OFF...
WHICH WAY, UNCLE?
HEAD FOR THE JUNGLE OF DAVELI!

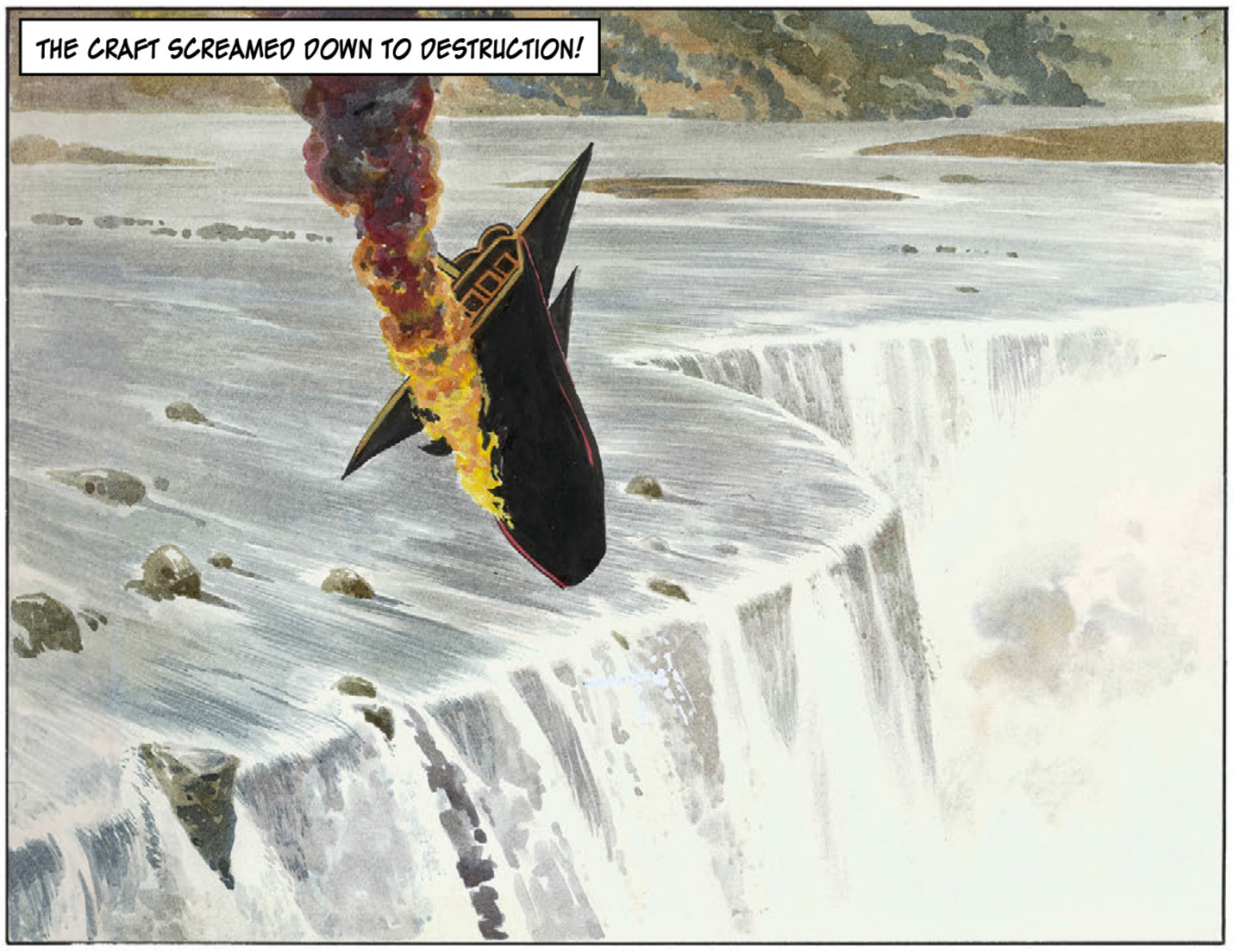
FURTHER EXPLANATION CAME LATER, AS THEY SWEPT THROUGH THE NIGHT SKY ACROSS THE FACE OF THE PLANET.
THERE MUST BE A SMALL ARMY OF THOSE ACCURSED REBEL LOKANS HIDDEN IN THAT JUNGLE!
YES... AND NOW, WITH THE AID OF THE SECRET FORMULA, THEY CAN DOMINATE THE ENTIRE PLANET... OR DESTROY IT!


WHEN DAWN BROKE OVER THE DENSE JUNGLE OF DAVELI, A HOST OF LOKANS SWARMED OUT OF THEIR HUTS TO GREET THE CRAFT THAT DESCENDED INTO THE CLEARING.
THEY'VE RETURNED!

A HUSH FELL ON THE GATHERING AS THE MEN ALIGHTED FROM THE CRAFT... AND THE FATEFUL CASKET WAS HELD UP FOR ALL TO SEE.
WARRIORS OF LOKA... ONCE MORE WE SHALL BE THE MASTERS OF ELEKTON!

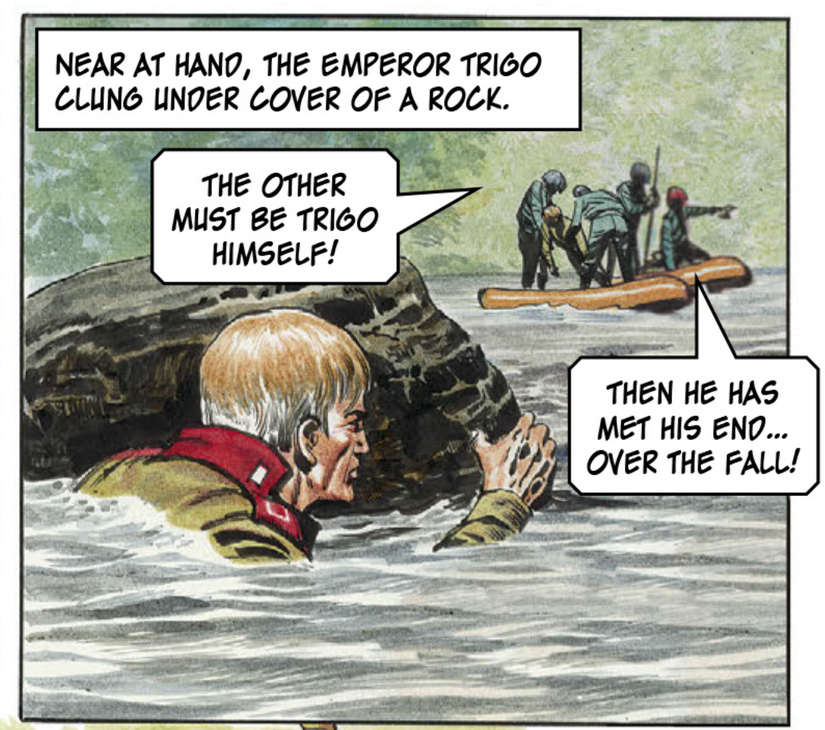
THE LOKANS WERE WELL PROVIDED WITH STOLEN TRIGAN EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING DETECTION GEAR. IT WAS THE LATTER WHICH CAUSED THE DOWNFALL OF TRIGO AND HIS COMPANIONS!
STRANGE CRAFT APPROACHING!
OPEN FIRE AND DESTROY IT!

HIGH OVER THE GREEN ROOF OF THE VAST JUNGLE, THE TRIGAN CRAFT LURCHED DRUNKENLY AS PROJECTILES EXPLODED ALL ABOUT IT.
WE'RE HIT!


THE CRAFT SCREAMED DOWN TO DESTRUCTION!

THE LOKANS WATCHED IT SMACK INTO THE WATER. ORDERS WERE SHOUTED.
I SAW THREE MEN IN THE CRAFT!
LAUNCH THE BOATS! BRING OUT ANY SURVIVORS!

THEY MANAGED TO RECOVER THE LIMP FORMS OF BRAG AND JANNO... ALIVE BUT UNCONSCIOUS.
BY THE STARS! IT'S BRAG! WE LEFT HIM FOR DEAD ON THE ISLE OF SILENCE!

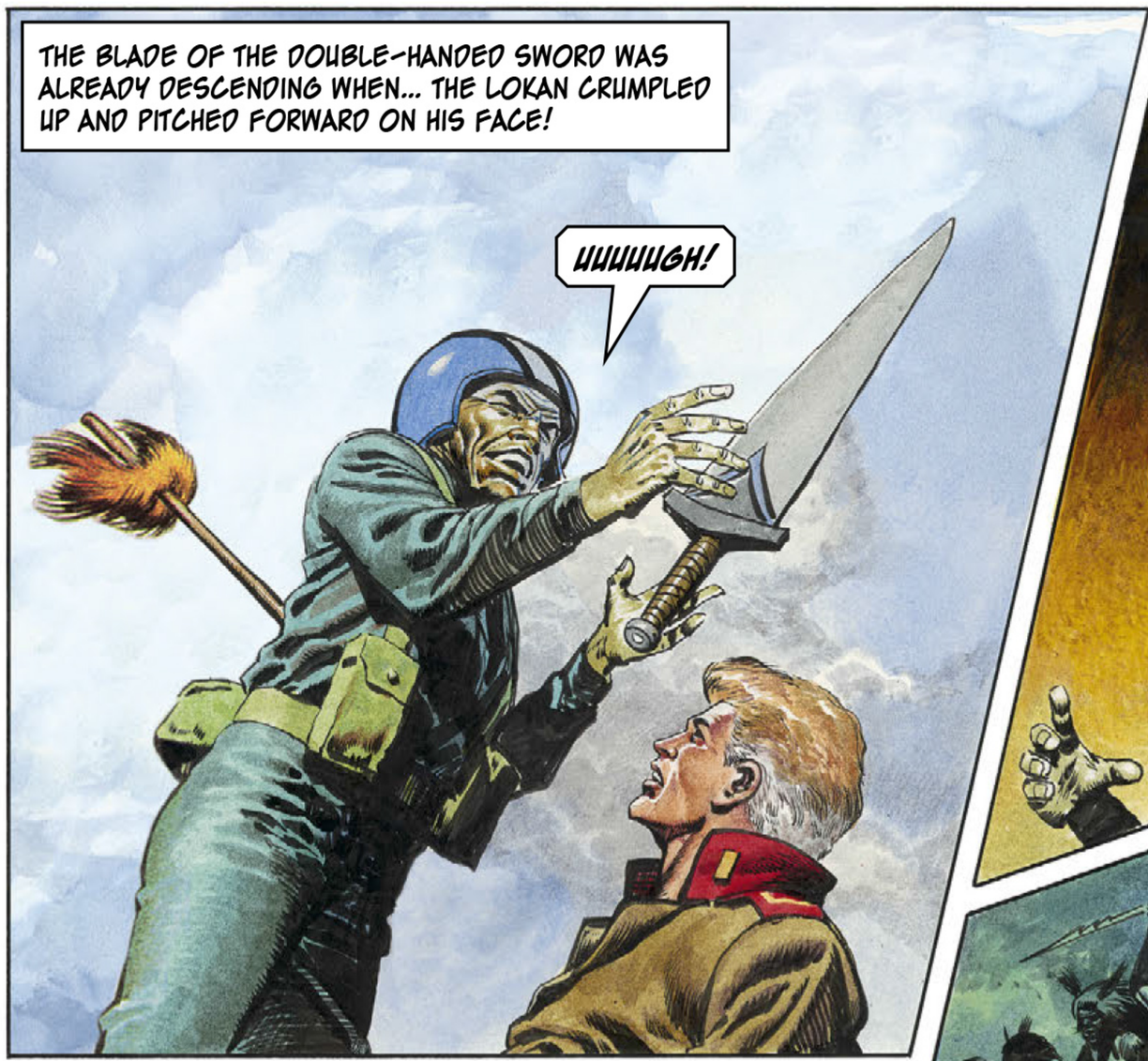

NEAR AT HAND, THE EMPEROR TRIGO CLUNG UNDER COVER OF A ROCK.
THE OTHER MUST BE TRIGO HIMSELF!
THEN HE HAS MET HIS END... OVER THE FALL!

WHEN THE LOKANS HAD RETURNED TO THE BANK WITH THEIR PRISONERS, TRIGO MADE THE PERILOUS JOURNEY FROM ROCK TO ROCK... TILL HE REACHED DRY LAND.

SOME TIME LATER, IN THE LOKAN'S CAMP, THEIR LEADER SMASHED OPEN THE FATEFUL CASKET AND TOOK OUT THE SECRET FORMULA OF DESTRUCTION.
BEHOLD!

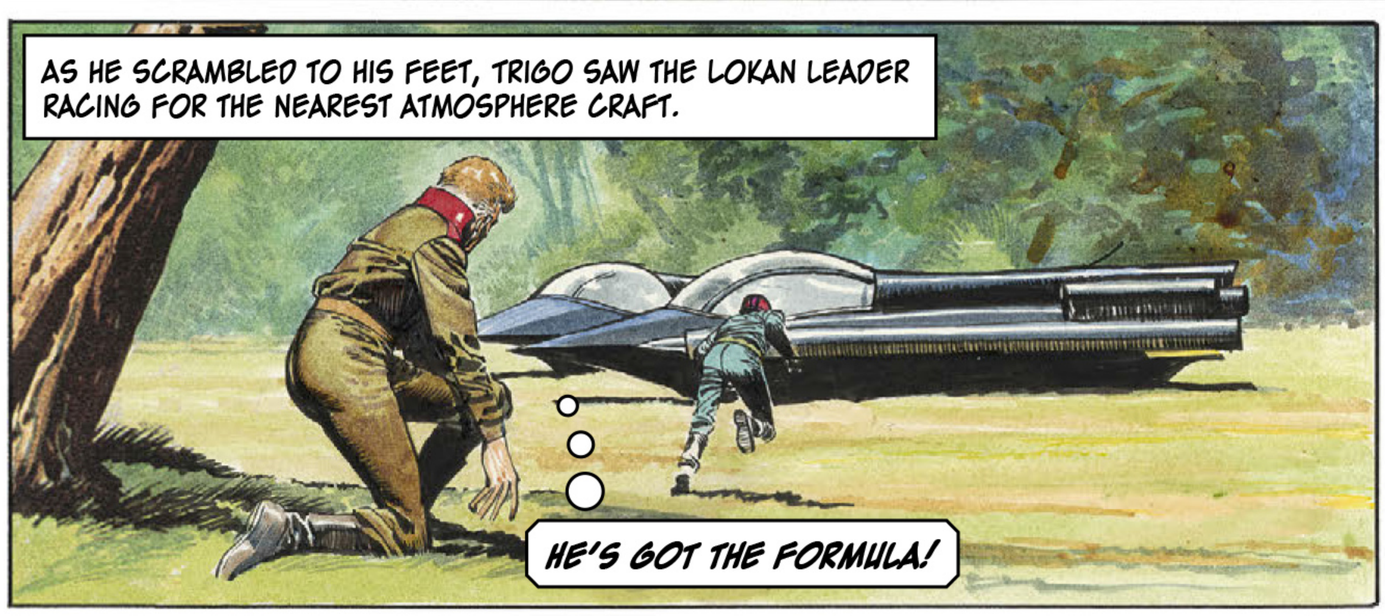
AND THEN... IT HAPPENED! LIKE A THUNDERBOLT, SOMETHING SWUNG DOWN FROM THE TREE-TOPS.

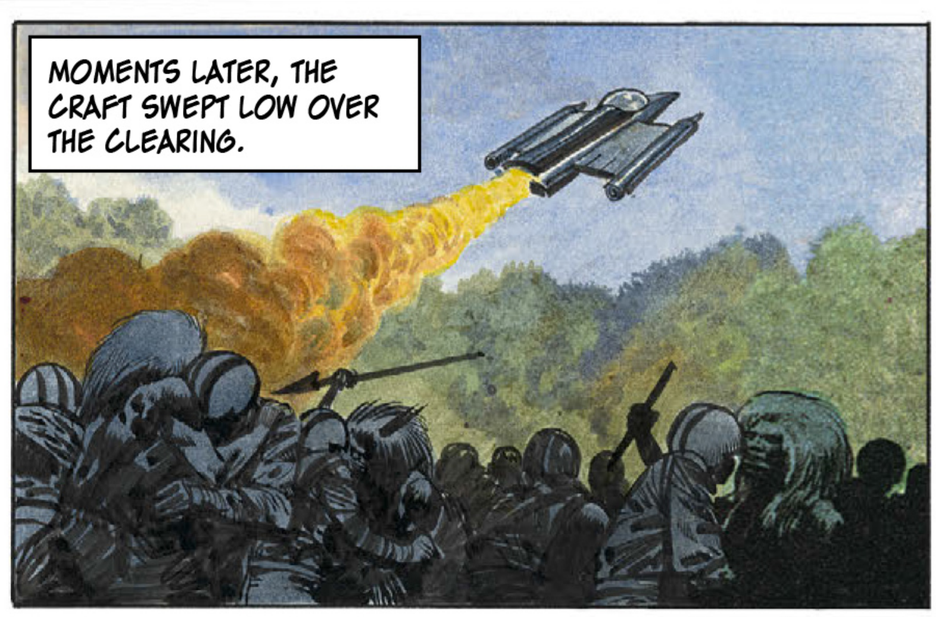
THE FORMULA WAS PLUCKED FROM THE LOKAN LEADER'S HAND!
AT THE END OF HIS BREATHTAKING SWING, TRIGO SCATTERED AN ENEMY GUN CREW FROM THEIR LOFTY PERCH...
AAAAAH!
A PAUSE... TO SPRAY A HAIL OF PROJECTILES AMONG THE LOKANS BELOW...
...THEN HE LEAPT TO THE GROUND AND RACED FOR A WAITING ATMOSPHERE CRAFT.
AND NOW... TO GET THIS FORMULA TO SAFETY!
BUT HIS DARING ACTION WAS DOOMED TO FAILURE! HALF WAY TO THE CRAFT, HE WAS HIT IN THE LEG AND FELL HEADLONG!
UUUUGH!
A CLUTCHING HAND SNATCHED UP THE FALLEN FORMULA-AND...
DESTROY HIM!
A DOUBLE-BLADED LOKAN WAR SWORD WAS RAISED ON HIGH OVER THE DEFENCELESS HEAD OF THE TRIGAN EMPEROR!

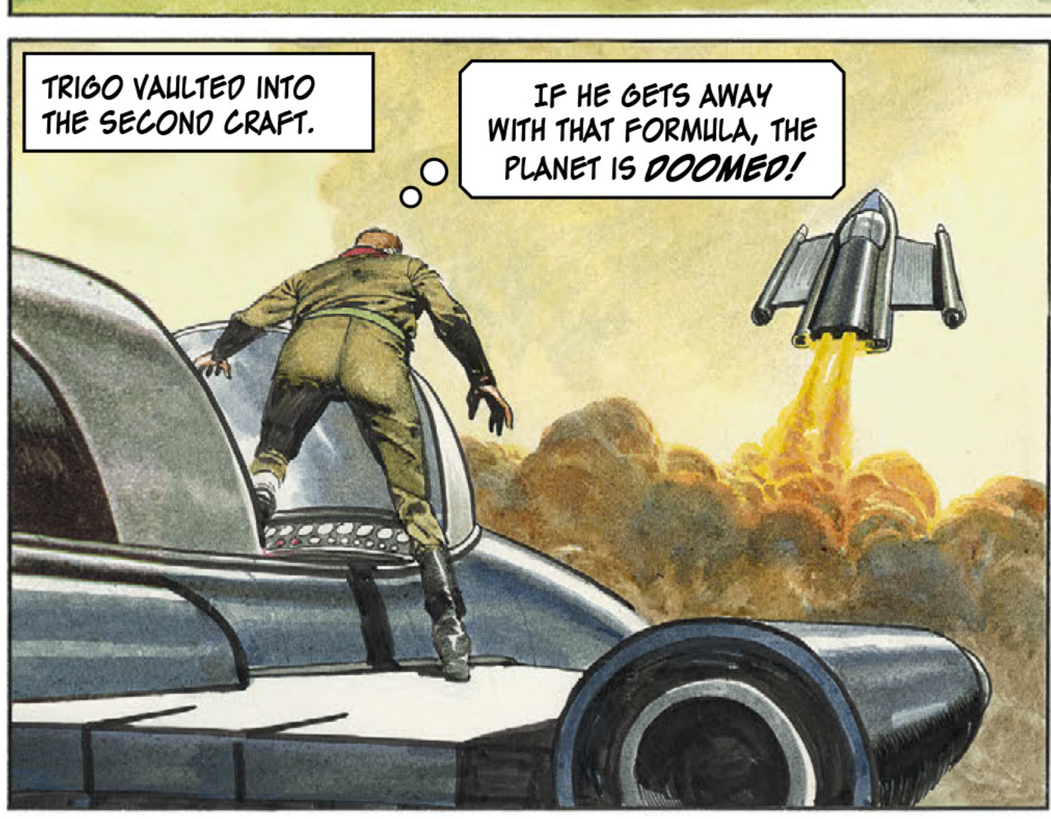

THE BLADE OF THE DOUBLE-HANDED SWORD WAS ALREADY DESCENDING WHEN... THE LOKAN CRUMPLED UP AND PITCHED FORWARD ON HIS FACE!
UUUUUGH!

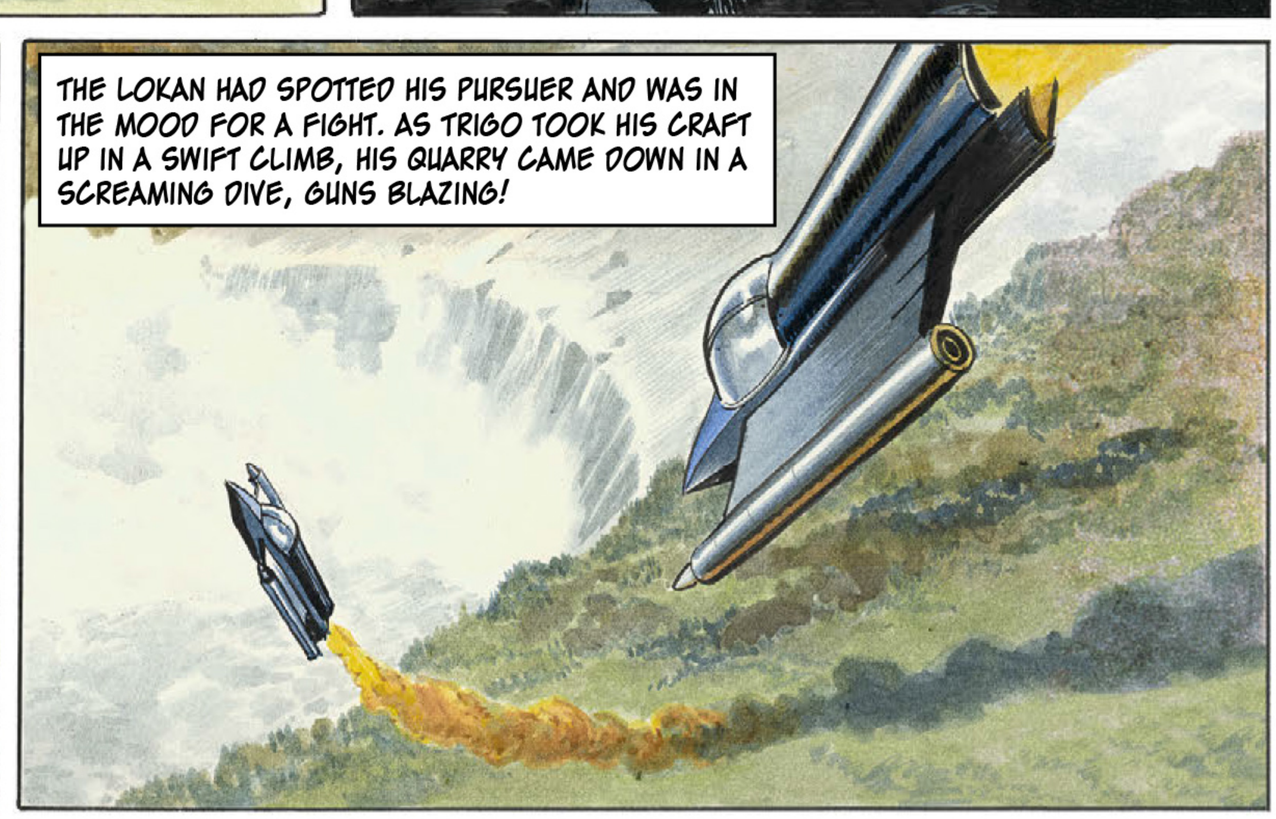
AND THEN...
BY ALL THE STARS! LOOK!
DAVELI WARRIORS!

THEY CAME CHARGING OUT OF THE JUNGLE, WEAPONS FLASHING THROUGH THE AIR... THE SPLENDID WARRIORS OF DAVELI, STAUNCH ALLIES OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!


AS HE SCRAMBLED TO HIS FEET, TRIGO SAW THE LOKAN LEADER RACING FOR THE NEAREST ATMOSPHERE CRAFT.
HE'S GOT THE FORMULA!


MOMENTS LATER, THE CRAFT SWEPT LOW OVER THE CLEARING.


TRIGO VAULTED INTO THE SECOND CRAFT.
IF HE GETS AWAY WITH THAT FORMULA, THE PLANET IS DOOMED!


THE LOKAN HAD SPOTTED HIS PURSUER AND WAS IN THE MOOD FOR A FIGHT. AS TRIGO TOOK HIS CRAFT UP IN A SWIFT CLIMB, HIS QUARRY CAME DOWN IN A SCREAMING DIVE, GUNS BLAZING!

TRIGO'S INSTRUMENT PANEL DISSOLVED INTO A MASS OF SCRAP METAL AND HE WAS INSTANTLY ENVELOPED IN FLAMES.
HE'S GOT ME!
THROUGH THE FLAMES HE SAW HIS ENEMY AHEAD OF HIM. ONLY ONE THOUGHT DINNED IN TRIGO'S BRAIN... AND HE DELIBERATELY STEERED THE DOOMED CRAFT TOWARDS HIS ADVERSARY!
FOR THE SAKE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON!
THEY MET WITH SHATTERING FORCE ABOVE THE TUMBLING WATERS OF THE BROAD RIVER!
TRIGO WAS THROWN CLEAR AND THE SHOCK OF THE ICY WATERS INSTANTLY REVIVED HIM. SUDDENLY HE SAW THE LIMP FORM OF HIS ENEMY FLOATING PAST... AND HE REACHED OUT TO GRAB HIM.
BY THIS TIME THE DAVELI WARRIORS HAD OVERPOWERED THE LOKANS AND FREED BRAG AND JANNO. THEY ALL GATHERED ROUND AS TRIGO BROUGHT HIS BURDEN ASHORE.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE FORMULA?
GONE! LOST FOREVER IN THE RAPIDS! NO MAN WILL EVER SET EYES ON IT AGAIN!
LATER, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, WISE OLD PERIC GAVE THE EMPEROR HIS ASSURANCES.
IT IS OF NO CONSEQUENCE, TRIGO. IT WILL TAKE A LONG TIME-YEARS PERHAPS-BUT I CAN RE-WORK THE FORMULA.
TRIGO WAS SILENT FOR A WHILE BEFORE REPLYING.
NO, OLD FRIEND! WE HAVE LEARNED OUR LESSON. THE PLANET CAME VERY CLOSE TO DESTRUCTION. FROM NOW ON, THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WILL KEEP THE PEACE OF ELEKTON WITHOUT THE FORMULA!

XX

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE TYRANT

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 403-415

4th October – 27th December 1969

IN THE MONTH OF YUSS OF THE SOLAR YEAR, ATMOSPHERE CRAFT FROM ALL OVER THE TRIGAN EMPIRE SWARMED TO TRIGAN CITY.

ON AN APPOINTED DAY, MASSED CROWDS STOOD BREATHLESS AS TRIGO APPEARED BEFORE THEM IN THE GREAT CITY SQUARE.

MY PEOPLE! AS YOU KNOW, I BELIEVE THAT MY WORK FOR THE EMPIRE IS DONE.

THEN CAME THE SOLEMN MOMENT OF ABDICATION.

FROM THIS DAY, TRIGAN WILL BECOME A REPUBLIC, PRESIDED OVER BY THREE CONSULS... TRIED AND TRUSTED MEN, KNOWN AND HONOURED BY YOU ALL.

MY BROTHER, BRAG... A FAITHFUL BULWARK OF THE OLD EMPIRE!

PERIC... ELEKTON'S GREATEST SCIENTIST AND ONE OF THE WISEST MEN WHO EVER LIVED ON THIS PLANET!

MARSHAL ZEROS... CHIEF OF THE AIR FLEET!

I RENOUNCE FOREVER THE IMPERIAL CROWN OF TRIGAN... CONFIDENT THAT MY PEOPLE WILL GROW IN GREATNESS AND PEACE AS CITIZENS OF THE NEW TRIGAN REPUBLIC!

THE FOLLOWING DAY, A PRIVATE CITIZEN NAMED TRIGO BOARDED THE CRAFT WHICH WAS TO TAKE HIM ON A LONG JOURNEY OF EXPLORATION TO A DISTANT PART OF THE PLANET. WITH HIM WENT HIS YOUNG NEPHEW, JANNO.

FAREWELL! LONG LIVE THE TRIGAN REPUBLIC!

GOOD LUCK GO WITH YOU TRIGO!

LOLLING ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CROWD WAS A POORLY DRESSED YOUTH. HE SNEERED.

LONG LIVE THE TRIGAN REPUBLIC! *PAH!* IF THOSE THREE IDIOTS OF CONSULS HAD THE SENSE THEY WERE BORN WITH THEY'D BE DICTATORS OF TRIGAN BEFORE SUNDOWN!

HE WAS A PENNILESS STUDENT OF MATHEMATICS NAMED YORRO. THAT EVENING, HE RETURNED TO HIS LODGINGS TO FIND... TROUBLE!

HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH MY THINGS?

PUTTING THEM OUT IN THE STREET... AND YOU WITH THEM! I'M LETTING THE ROOM TO A TENANT WHO CAN PAY HIS RENT!

WITH NO MONEY AND NO FAMILY, YORRO COULD ONLY FIND SHELTER IN A CAVE BEYOND THE CITY WALLS.

MONEY! IF ONLY I HAD MONEY!

AND SO-DRIVEN ON BY HATRED, GREED AND THE LUST FOR POWER-THE DOWNTRODDEN STUDENT SET TO WORK. MONTHS PASSED...

IT'S COMING... IT'S COMING!

AND THEN... A WILD IDEA OCCURRED TO HIM. HE MADE SOME HASTY CALCULATIONS ON THE WALL.

RICHES ENOUGH TO BUY POWER AND GLORY! ENOUGH TO BUY THE WRETCHED TRIGAN REPUBLIC! ENOUGH TO BUY THE WHOLE ACCURSED PLANET AND MAKE THE MASSES KNEEL IN TERROR BEFORE ME!

COULD IT BE DONE? YES! IT LOOKS A FANTASTIC, REMOTE POSSIBILITY!

A YEAR LATER... UNKEMPT AND HALF-STARVED...

I HAVE IT! THE SECRET OF POWER!

THREE NUMBERS WHICH HOLD THE KEY TO THE DOMINATION OF THE PLANET ELEKTON!

LATE ONE EVENING, A PRIVATE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT DESCENDED ON TO THE FLAT ROOF OF A SUMPTUOUS MANSION IN TRIGAN CITY.

A RICHLY-DRESSED CITIZEN ALIGHTED FROM THE CRAFT. HE WAS YARS NOBRICK, A PROMINENT MERCHANT, AND THIS WAS HIS HOME.

OOOOOOOH! IT'S BEEN A TIRING DAY.

HE NEVER SAW HIS ATTACKER!

TAKE THAT, MONEYBAGS!

UUUUFFF!

MOMENTS LATER, THE STUDENT YORRO WAS WEARING THE MERCHANT'S CLOTHES AND CLIMBING INTO HIS CRAFT.

AND NOW... *TO MONAMBO!*

AS HE FLEW OVER THE SLEEPING CITY, HE LOOKED DOWN.

WHEN I RETURN HERE, IT WILL BE TO *BUY* TRIGAN CITY!

MONAMBO WAS A SMALL COUNTRY ON THE FRINGE OF THE TRIGAN REPUBLIC. THOUGH SMALL, IT WAS RICH BEYOND BELIEF ON ACCOUNT OF ITS VAST MINERAL RESOURCES. ITS PEOPLE LIVED IN LUXURY AND IDLENESS.

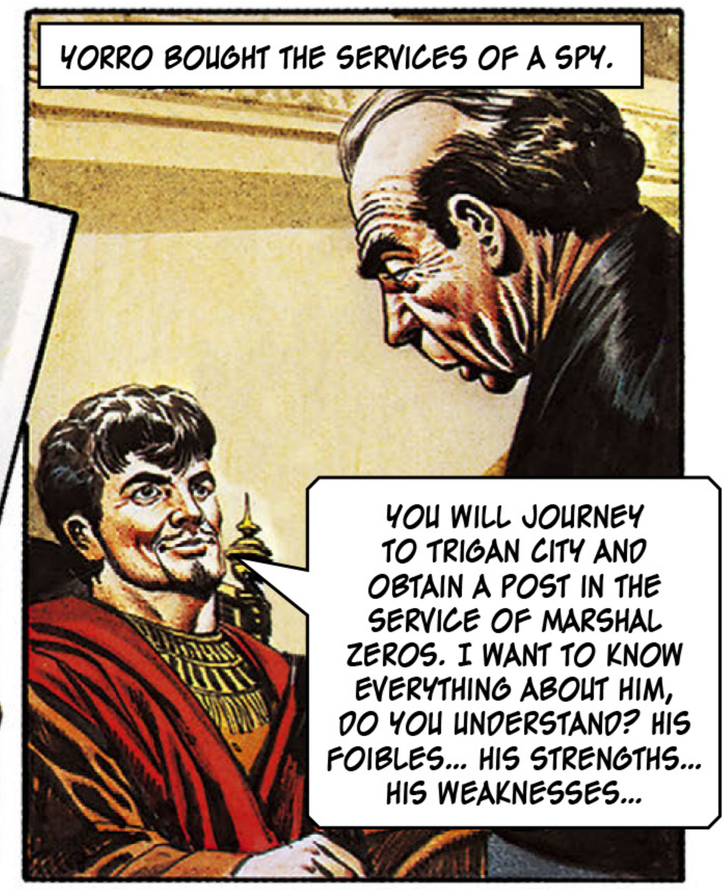
BORED WITH IDLENESS, THE MONAMBONS' GREATEST PLEASURE WAS GAMBLING. DAY AND NIGHT THE GREAT GAMING HALLS WERE OPEN FOR THE NATIONAL PASTIME OF BANGORA.

TO ONE OF THESE HALLS CAME YORRO, WITH YARS NOBRICK'S PURSE IN HIS HAND AND FIERCE GLEE IN HIS HEART.
WITH THE THREE KEY NUMBERS, I CANNOT LOSE!
HE STAKED ALL HIS STOLEN MONEY ON THE THREE FATEFUL NUMBERS-AND...
YOU WIN ALL, MASTER!
BY THE STARS!
HE PLAYED ALL THAT DAY... ALONE... FOR THE OTHERS SOON GAVE UP AND CROWDED TO WATCH THE FABULOUSLY-LUCKY STRANGER.
THE DEMONS OF DAVELI MUST BE PLAYING AT HIS ELBOW! IN ALL MY YEARS I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH LUCK!
AND... IN THE END...
MASTER, YOU HAVE BROKEN THE BANK!
VERY GOOD. THAT WILL DO... FOR TODAY!
THAT NIGHT, HE TOOK A SUITE OF CHAMBERS IN THE CITY'S MOST SUMPTUOUS INN.
EMPTY THE MONEY ON TO THE FLOOR... THERE!
AND THEN... HE BATHED IN HIS RICHES!
HEH! HEH! HEH! IT'S MINE! ALL MINE!
WITHIN DAYS, I CAN BUY THE TRIGAN REPUBLIC... AND AFTER THAT... THE WHOLE PLANET!

THEY SPOKE OF HIM AS "THE MAN WHO BROKE THE BANK AT MONAMBO."

YORRO WAS WELL PLEASED WITH THE SUCCESS OF HIS PLAN... SO FAR.
I AM NOW THE RICHEST INDIVIDUAL ON THE PLANET! AND I WILL NOW BUY MYSELF THE DICTATORSHIP OF ELEKTON... BEGINNING WITH THE TRIGAN REPUBLIC!

FROM A DOSSIER HE PRODUCED PICTURES OF THE THREE CONSULS OF THE TRIGAN REPUBLIC.
THEY SAY EVERY MAN HAS HIS PRICE... BUT I DOUBT IF THAT STUBBORN FOOL BRAG CAN BE BOUGHT. AND MONEY MEANS NOTHING TO PERIC. HE LIVES ONLY FOR SCIENCE. BUT MARSHAL ZEROS? I WONDER!
SOME DAYS LATER, LOW OVER THE PLAIN OF VORG, A FIGHTER CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET ZOOMED AND TURNED IN BREATHTAKING ACROBATICS.


YORRO BOUGHT THE SERVICES OF A SPY.
YOU WILL JOURNEY TO TRIGAN CITY AND OBTAIN A POST IN THE SERVICE OF MARSHAL ZEROS. I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM, DO YOU UNDERSTAND? HIS FOIBLES... HIS STRENGTHS... HIS WEAKNESSES...

ITS PILOT WAS MARSHAL ZEROS. LATER, HE LANDED IN THE CITY AND SMILED WITH SATISFACTION.
MY HANDS AND EYES HAVEN'T LOST THEIR SKILL! I COULD STILL FLY RINGS ROUND THE YOUNG PILOTS OF THE AIR FLEET.

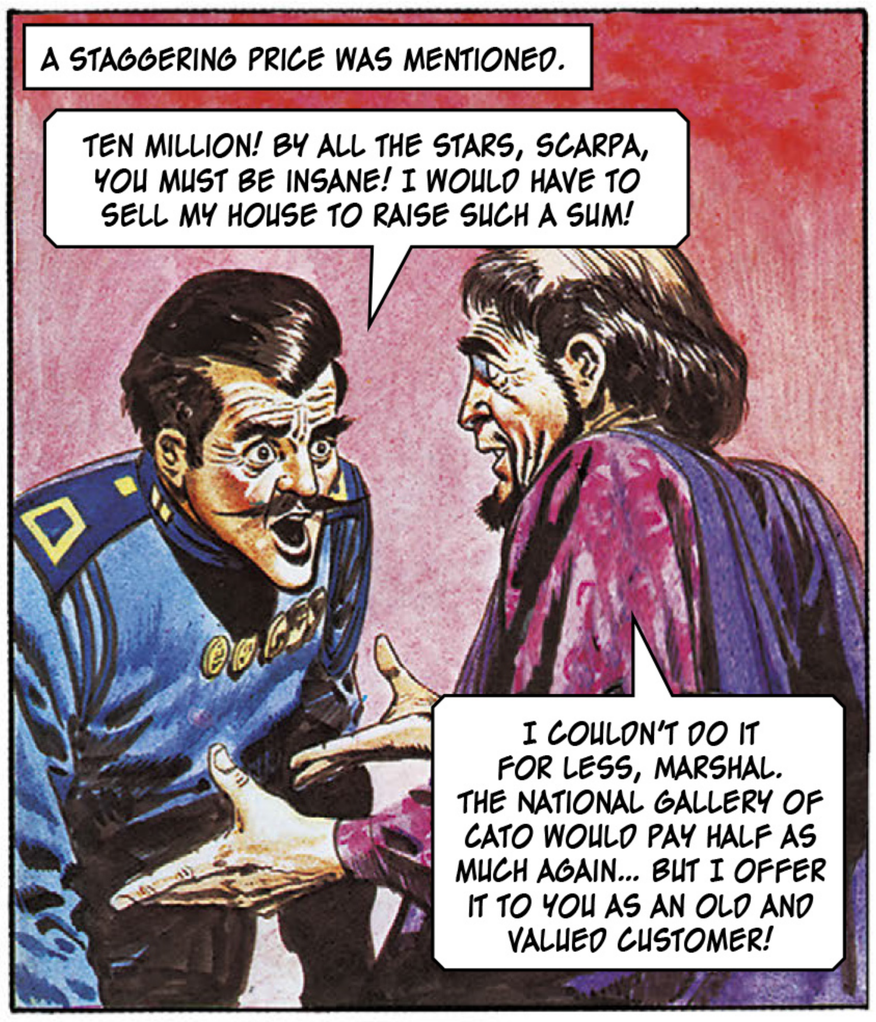
HE FLEW EVERY MORNING BEFORE BREAKFAST AND THEN RETURNED TO HIS MANSION.
YOU WILL SERVE MY MEAL IN THE ART GALLERY.
YES, MARSHAL.

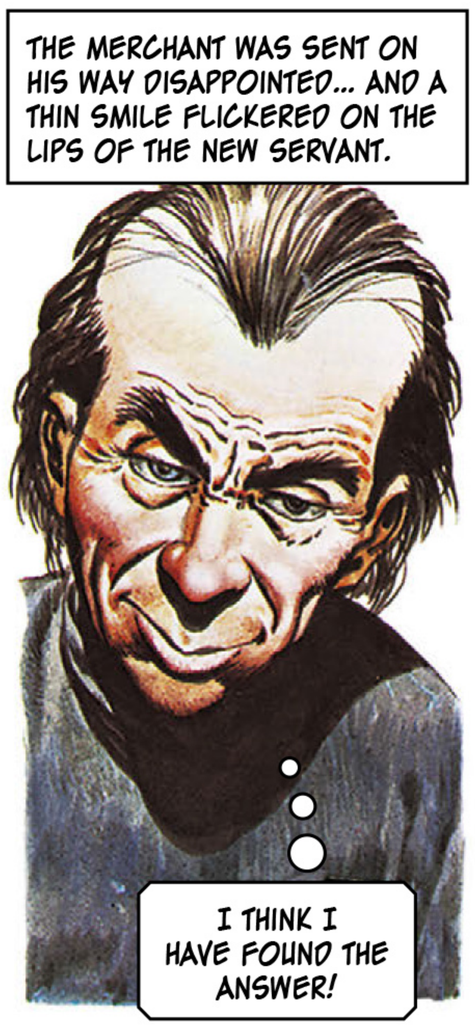
THE GREATEST DELIGHT OF HIS LIFE WAS HIS COLLECTION OF STATUARY, GATHERED FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.
AH, MY BEAUTIES... WHAT JOY YOU GIVE ME!

LATER, HE NOTICED A STRANGE FACE.
NEW, ARE YOU? WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
NORRO, SIR.

WHILE HE WAS STILL EATING, A MERCHANT WAS ADMITTED.
SCARPA, YOU OLD SCOUNDREL, YOU'LL BE THE RUINATION OF ME! WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT THIS TIME?

WHAT YOU HAVE ALWAYS CRAVED, MARSHAL! THE FAMOUS STATUE FROM THE RUINED TEMPLE OF WARRIORS IN THARV... AND I OFFER IT TO YOU!


A STAGGERING PRICE WAS MENTIONED.
TEN MILLION! BY ALL THE STARS, SCARPA, YOU MUST BE INSANE! I WOULD HAVE TO SELL MY HOUSE TO RAISE SUCH A SUM!
I COULDN'T DO IT FOR LESS, MARSHAL. THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CATO WOULD PAY HALF AS MUCH AGAIN... BUT I OFFER IT TO YOU AS AN OLD AND VALUED CUSTOMER!

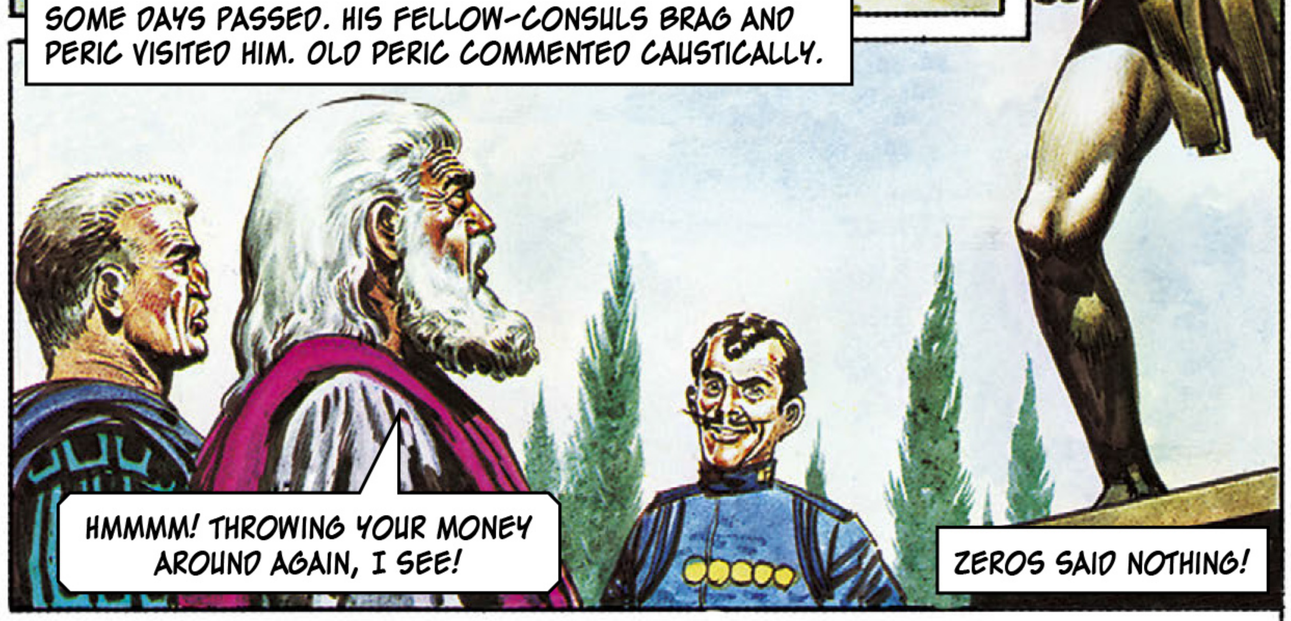

THE MERCHANT WAS SENT ON HIS WAY DISAPPOINTED... AND A THIN SMILE FLICKERED ON THE LIPS OF THE NEW SERVANT.
I THINK I HAVE FOUND THE ANSWER!

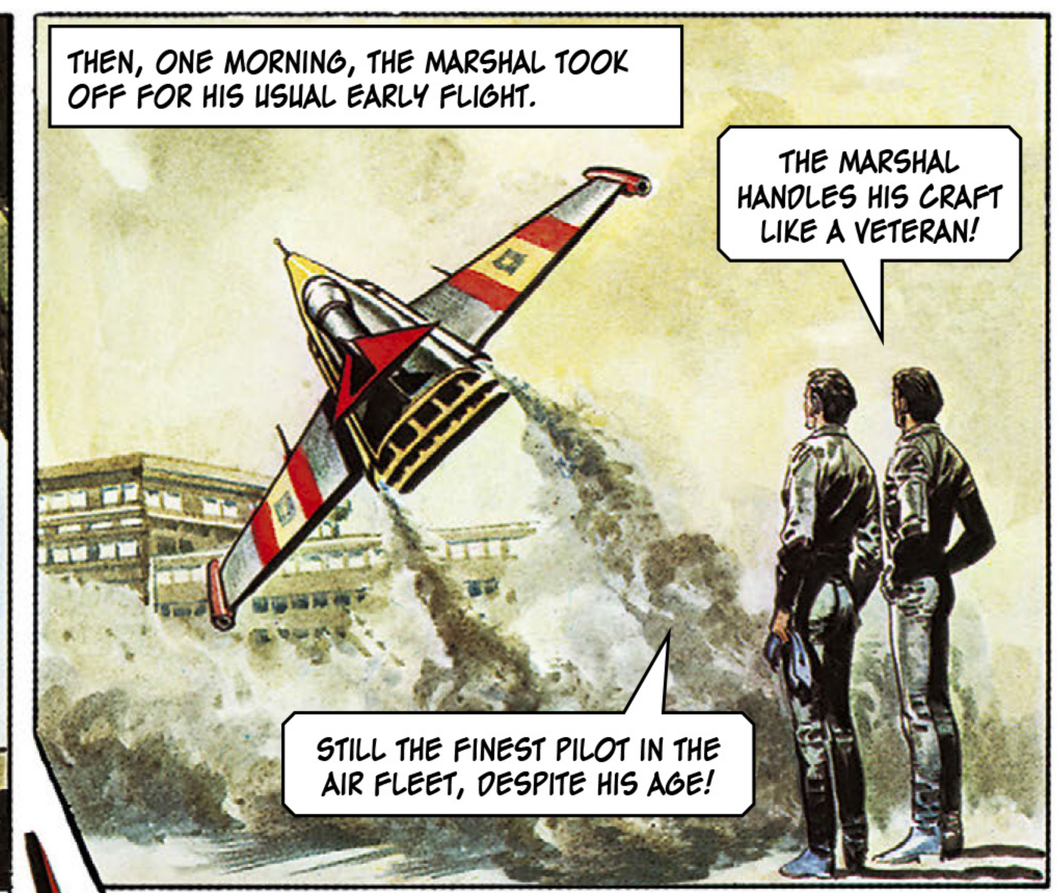
SOME DAYS LATER, MARSHAL ZEROS ROSE EARLY, AS USUAL, FOR HIS MORNING FLIGHT... AND SAW IN HIS GARDEN...
BY ALL THE STARS! HOW DID THAT GET HERE?

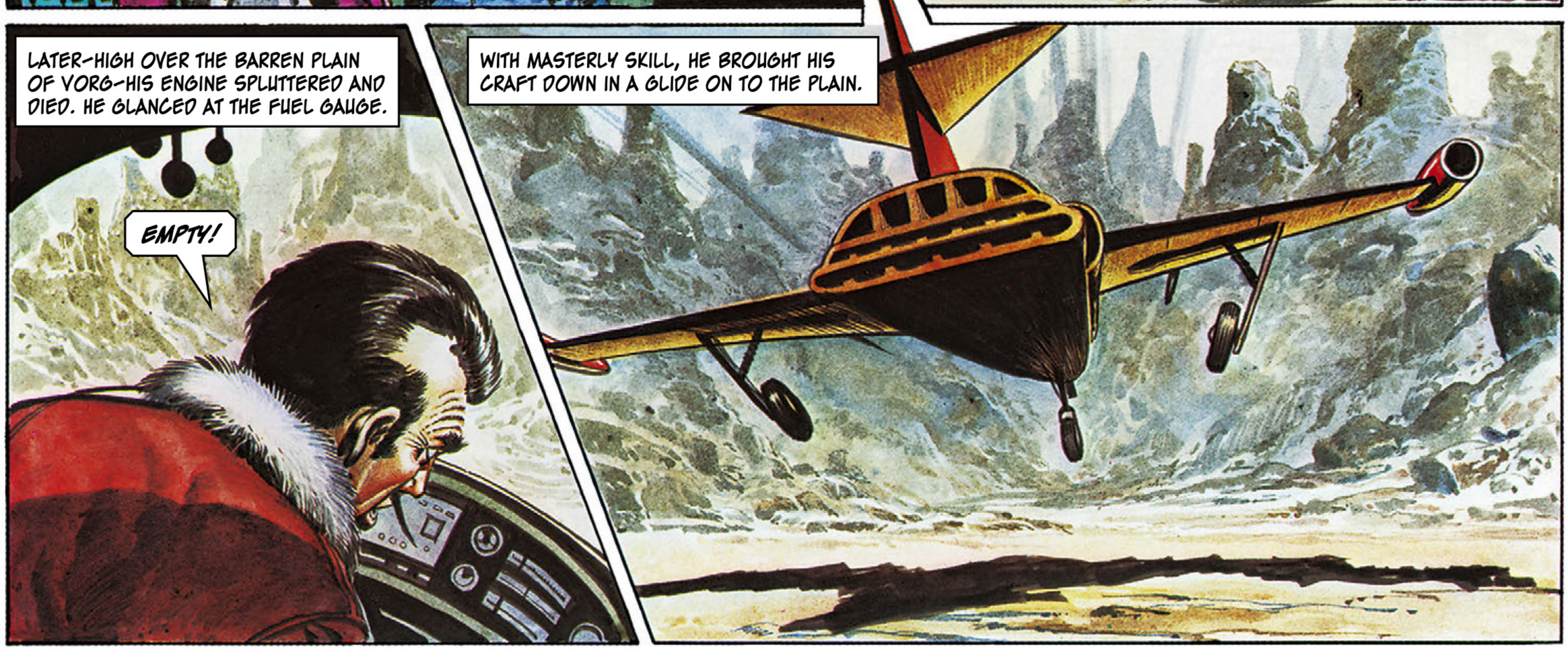
PUZZLED, MARSHAL ZEROS SENT FOR THE MERCHANT SCARPA AND QUESTIONED HIM ABOUT THE STATUE.
BUT SURELY YOU KNOW, MARSHAL. YOUR MESSENGER PAID ME FOR IT YESTERDAY AND ORDERED IT TO BE ERECTED HERE LAST NIGHT.

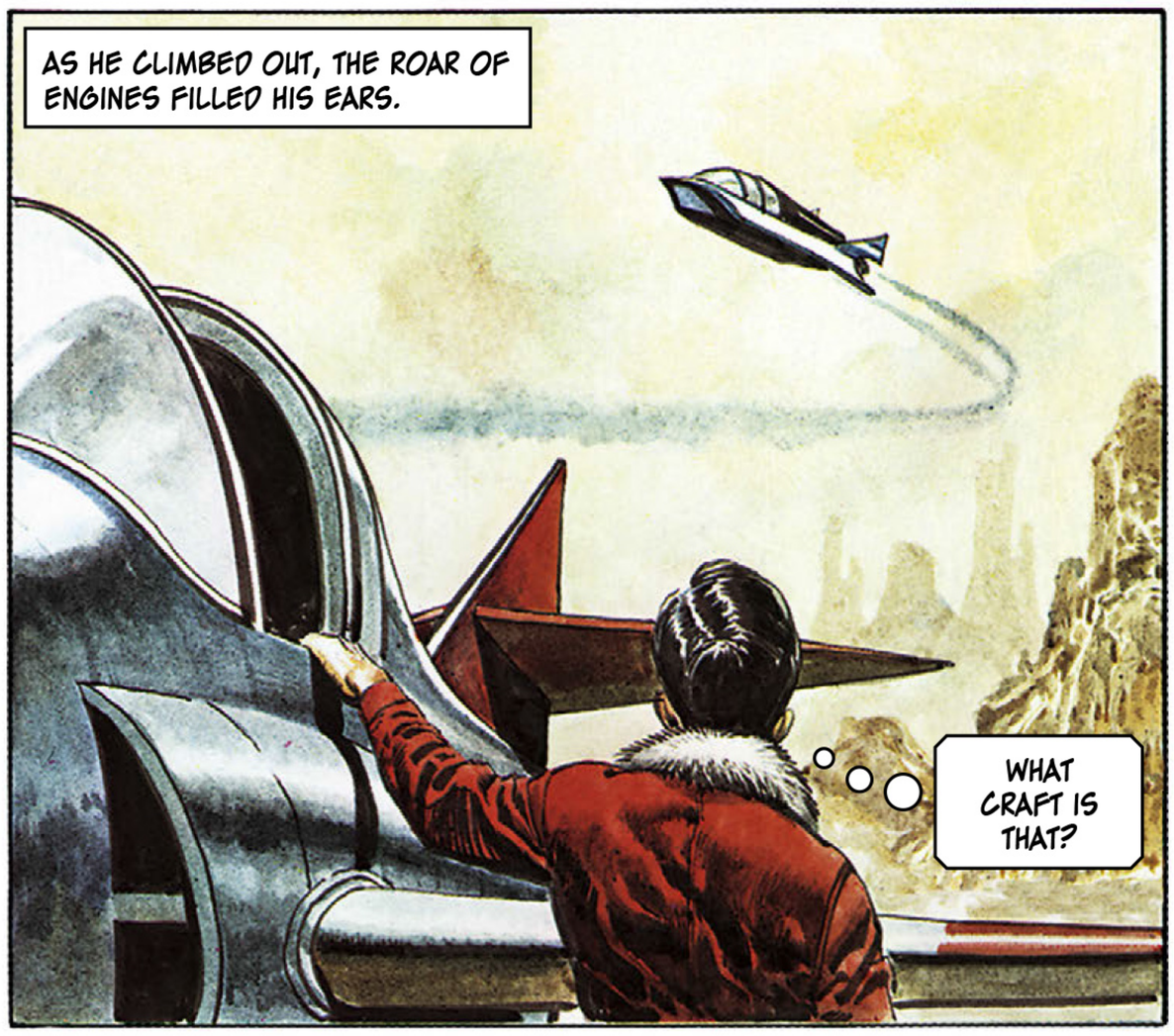
ZEROS DISMISSED THE MERCHANT WITHOUT ANY FURTHER COMMENT... AND GAZED THOUGHTFULLY AT THE STATUE.
WHO PAID FOR IT... AND ON WHOSE ORDERS WAS IT BROUGHT HERE? WELL... I SHALL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH, I DOUBT NOT!

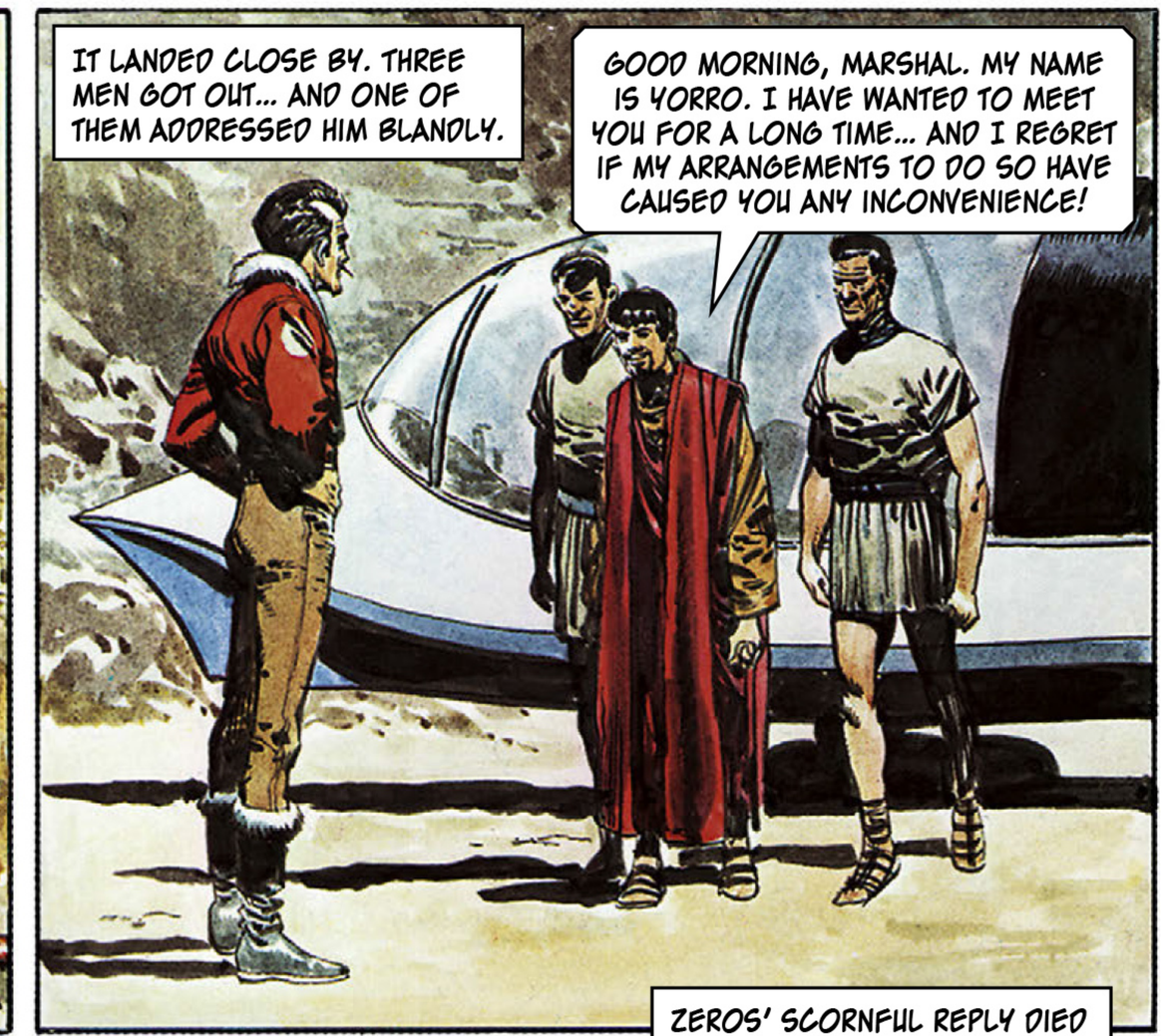
AND THEN... JOY OF OWNERSHIP OVERCAME ALL HIS SCRUPLES.
UNTIL THEN, YOU SHALL GRACE MY GARDEN AND DELIGHT MY EYES, PROUD WARRIOR!


SOME DAYS PASSED. HIS FELLOW-CONSULS BRAG AND PERIC VISITED HIM. OLD PERIC COMMENTED CAUSTICALLY.
HMMMM! THROWING YOUR MONEY AROUND AGAIN, I SEE!
ZEROS SAID NOTHING!


THEN, ONE MORNING, THE MARSHAL TOOK OFF FOR HIS USUAL EARLY FLIGHT.
THE MARSHAL HANDLES HIS CRAFT LIKE A VETERAN!
STILL THE FINEST PILOT IN THE AIR FLEET, DESPITE HIS AGE!


LATER-HIGH OVER THE BARREN PLAIN OF VORG-HIS ENGINE SPLUTTERED AND DIED. HE GLANCED AT THE FUEL GAUGE.
EMPTY!
WITH MASTERLY SKILL, HE BROUGHT HIS CRAFT DOWN IN A GLIDE ON TO THE PLAIN.


AS HE CLIMBED OUT, THE ROAR OF ENGINES FILLED HIS EARS.
WHAT CRAFT IS THAT?


IT LANDED CLOSE BY. THREE MEN GOT OUT... AND ONE OF THEM ADDRESSED HIM BLANDLY.
GOOD MORNING, MARSHAL. MY NAME IS YORRO. I HAVE WANTED TO MEET YOU FOR A LONG TIME... AND I REGRET IF MY ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO HAVE CAUSED YOU ANY INCONVENIENCE!

MARSHAL ZEROS GLARED FURIOUSLY AT YORRO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN THAT I ARRANGED FOR YOUR CRAFT TO BE EMPTIED OF FUEL. I CAN ARRANGE MOST THINGS... AS YOU WILL DISCOVER!

WHY HAVE WE MET? I WILL TELL YOU... BECAUSE YOU ARE GOING TO HELP ME BECOME THE DICTATOR OF THE TRIGAN REPUBLIC!

ZEROS' SCORNFUL REPLY DIED IN HIS THROAT.
YOU MUST BE MAD! WHY, I-
SILENCE! YOU ARE COMPLETELY IN MY POWER! YOU HAVE ALREADY BETRAYED YOUR PEOPLE BY ACCEPTING MY BRIBE OF A PRICELESS STATUE!

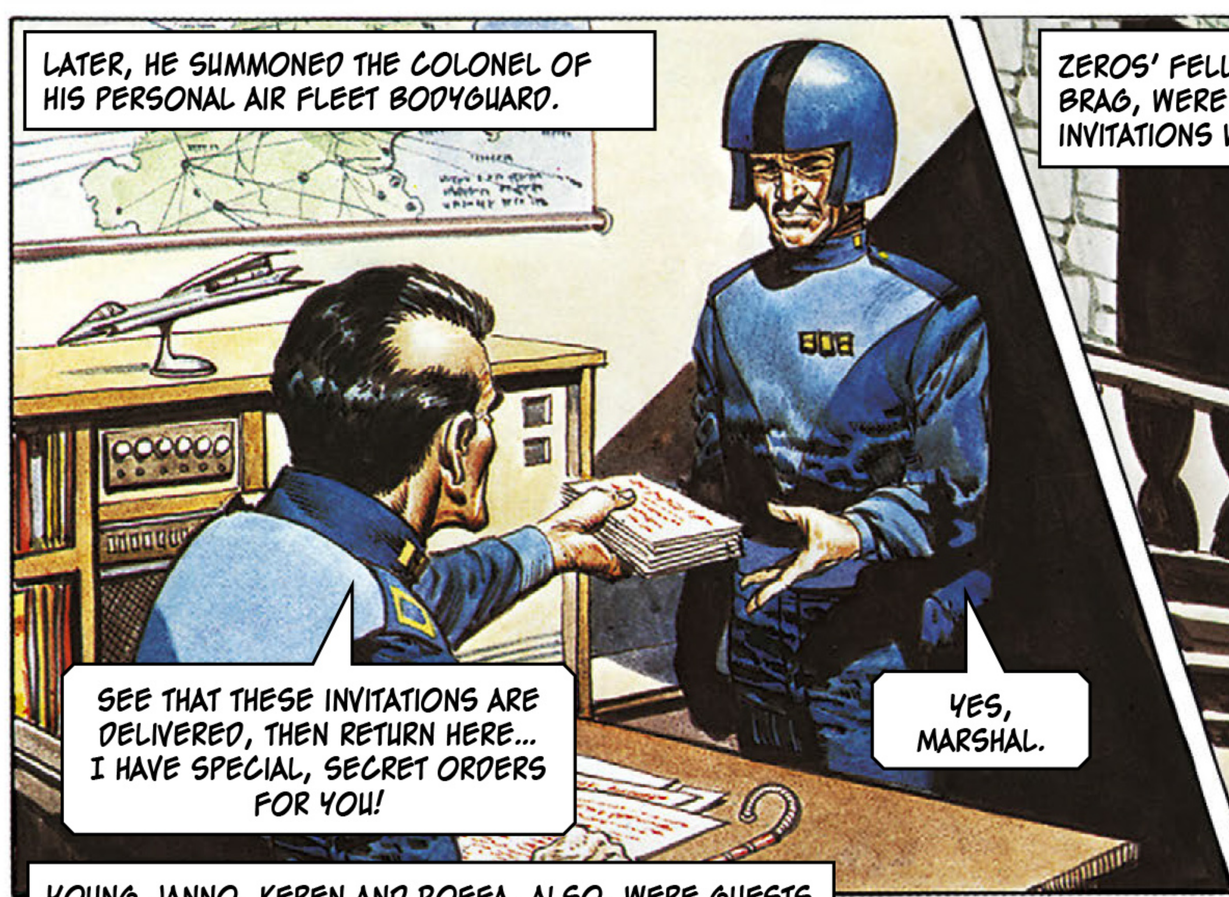
WITH A BELLOW OF FURY, THE MARSHAL HURLED HIMSELF AT HIS TORMENTOR-BUT...
BY ALL THE DEMONS OF DAVELI! I'LL SMASH YOU...
AAAAAH! STRIKE HIM DOWN!

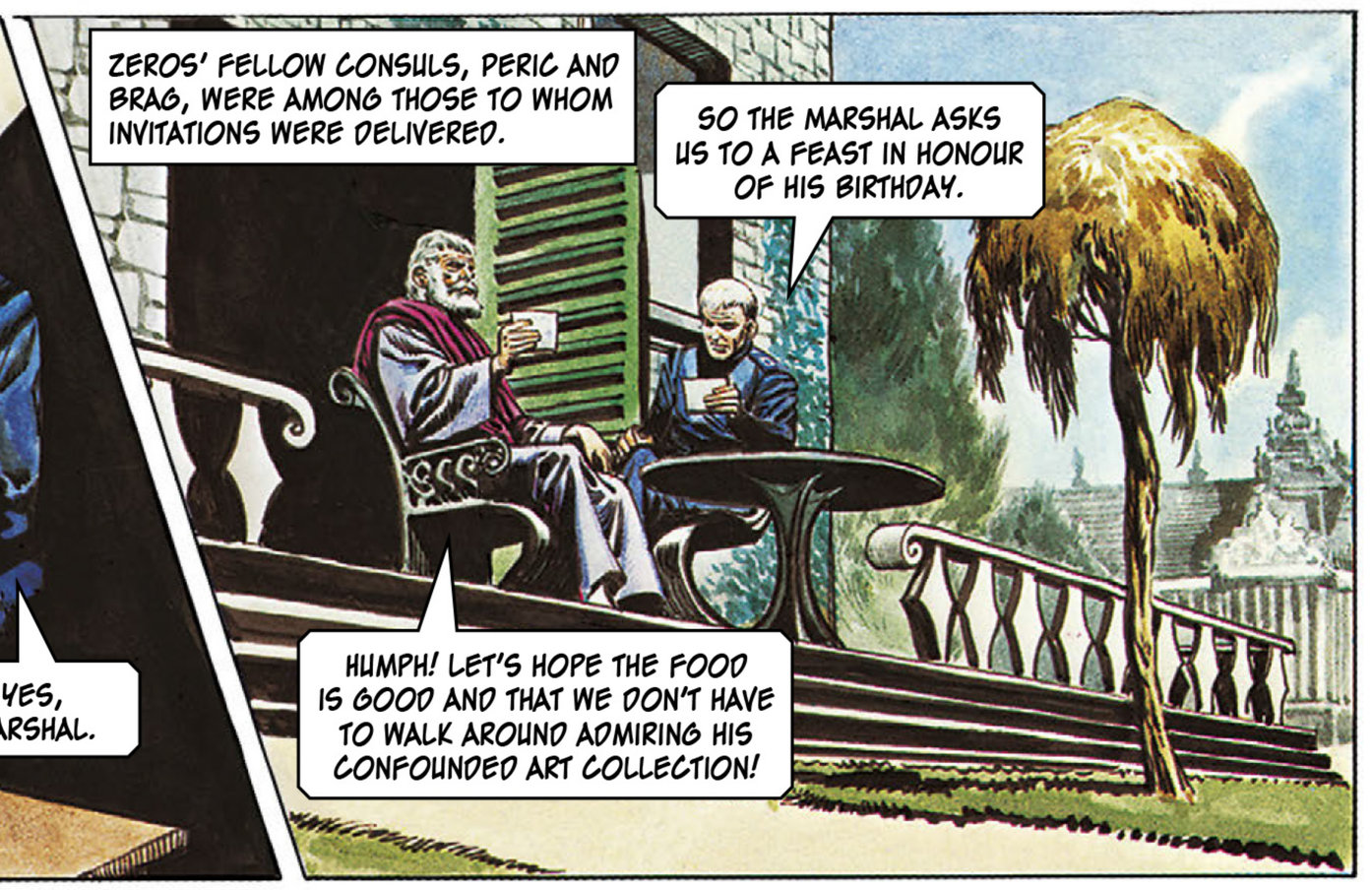
YORRO'S BRUTAL BODYGUARDS SENT THE VETERAN WARRIOR SPRAWLING.
NOW, YOU OLD FOOL... YOU WILL LISTEN TO ME AND YOU WILL DO EXACTLY AS I ORDER!

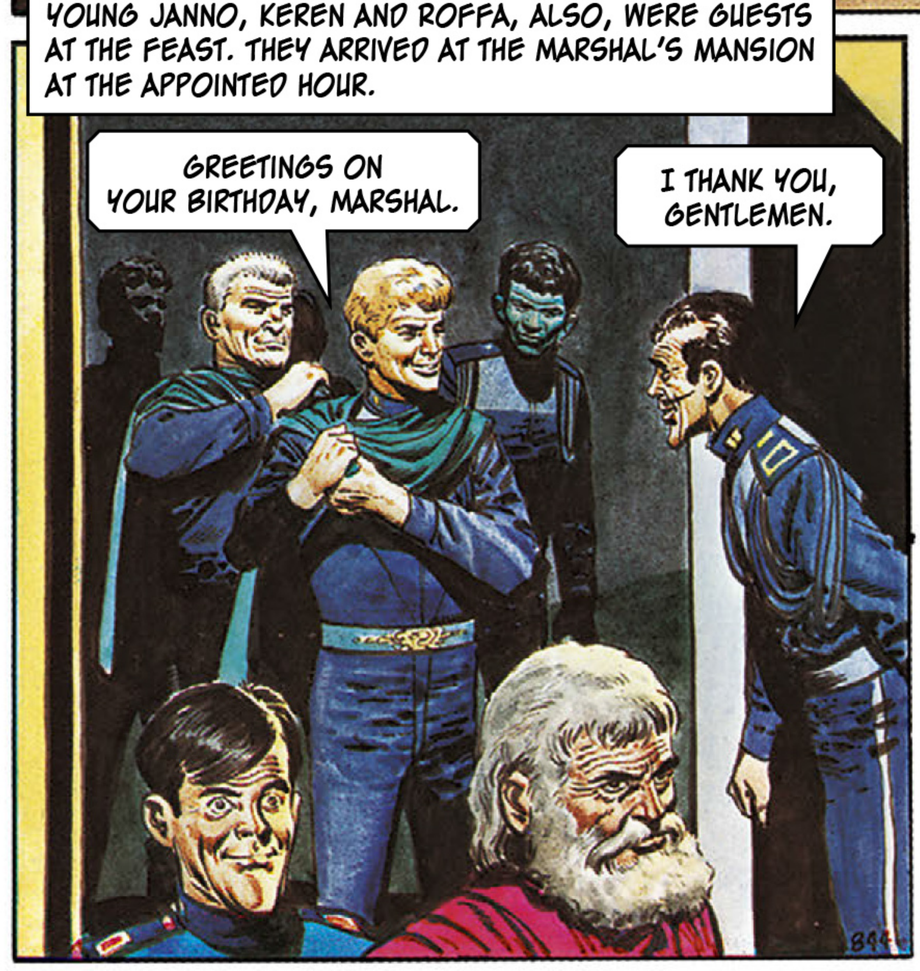
LATER THAT MORNING, ZEROS LANDED HIS CRAFT IN THE CITY AND STRODE AWAY, HIS HEAD BOWED IN BITTER THOUGHTS.
WHAT'S COME OVER THE MARSHAL?
PERHAPS HE'S REALISED THAT HE'S GETTING TOO OLD FOR FLYING!

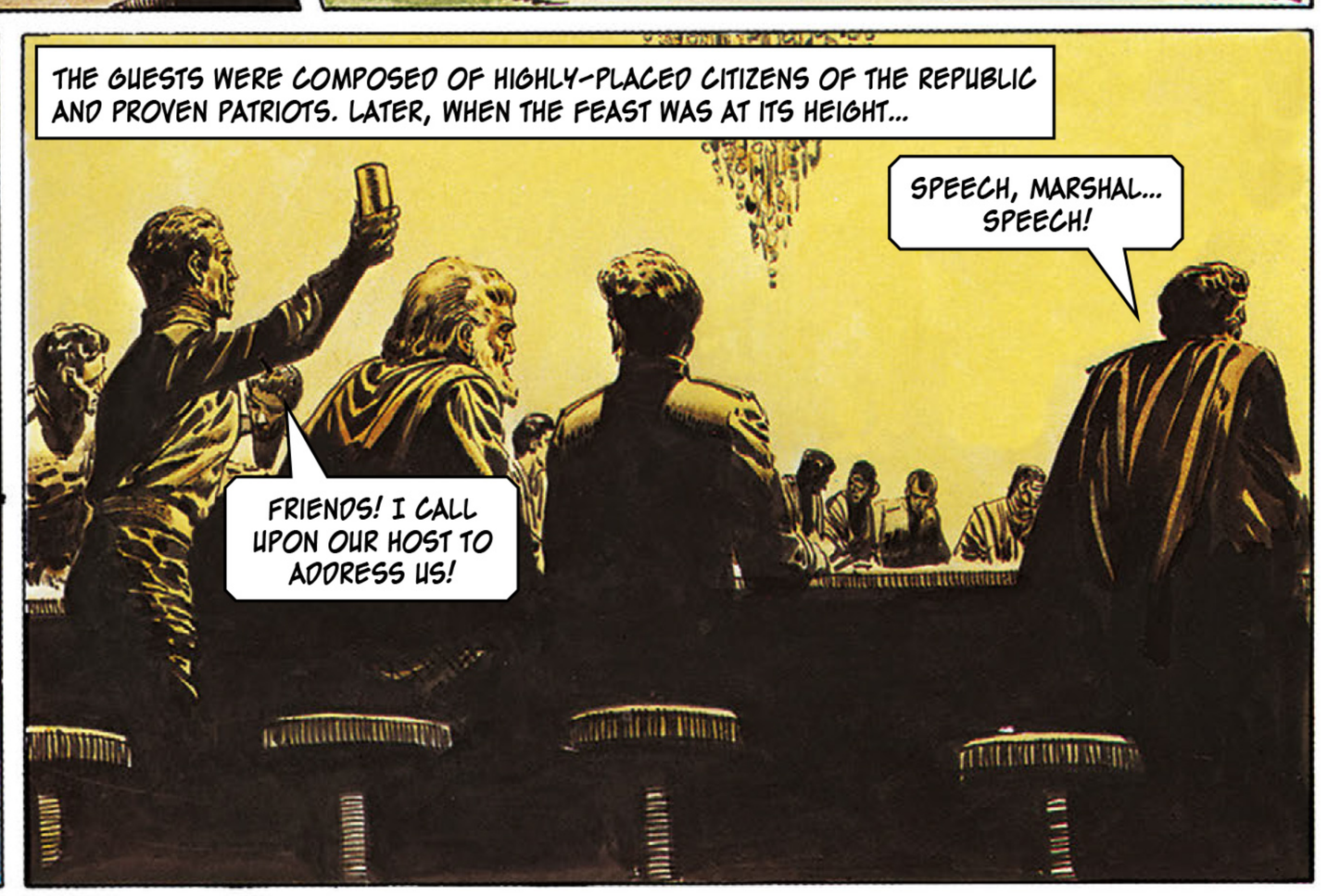
BACK IN HIS MANSION, THE MARSHAL LOOKED DOWN UPON THE PRICELESS STATUE THAT HAD SO MYSTERIOUSLY COME INTO HIS POSSESSION.
I CAN'T DEFY YORRO! IF HE PUTS OUT THE LIE THAT I ACCEPTED THE STATUE AS A BRIBE, I'M A RUINED MAN!

WEARILY, HE SAT DOWN AT HIS DESK...
I'M TOO OLD TO START ALL OVER AGAIN AT THE BOTTOM! AND YORRO PROMISES ME A HIGH POSITION IN THE NEW REGIME HE PLANS TO SET UP... SO...


LATER, HE SUMMONED THE COLONEL OF HIS PERSONAL AIR FLEET BODYGUARD.
SEE THAT THESE INVITATIONS ARE DELIVERED, THEN RETURN HERE... I HAVE SPECIAL, SECRET ORDERS FOR YOU!
YES, MARSHAL.


ZEROS' FELLOW CONSULS, PERIC AND BRAG, WERE AMONG THOSE TO WHOM INVITATIONS WERE DELIVERED.
SO THE MARSHAL ASKS US TO A FEAST IN HONOUR OF HIS BIRTHDAY.
HUMPH! LET'S HOPE THE FOOD IS GOOD AND THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO WALK AROUND ADMIRING HIS CONFOUNDED ART COLLECTION!

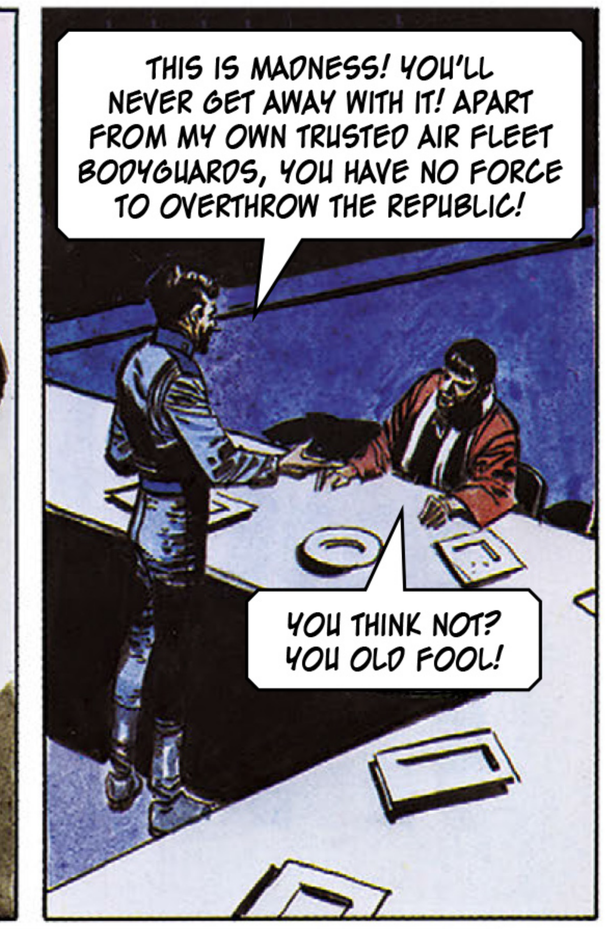

YOUNG JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA, ALSO, WERE GUESTS AT THE FEAST. THEY ARRIVED AT THE MARSHAL'S MANSION AT THE APPOINTED HOUR.
GREETINGS ON YOUR BIRTHDAY, MARSHAL.
I THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN.


THE GUESTS WERE COMPOSED OF HIGHLY-PLACED CITIZENS OF THE REPUBLIC AND PROVEN PATRIOTS. LATER, WHEN THE FEAST WAS AT ITS HEIGHT...
SPEECH, MARSHAL... SPEECH!
FRIENDS! I CALL UPON OUR HOST TO ADDRESS US!

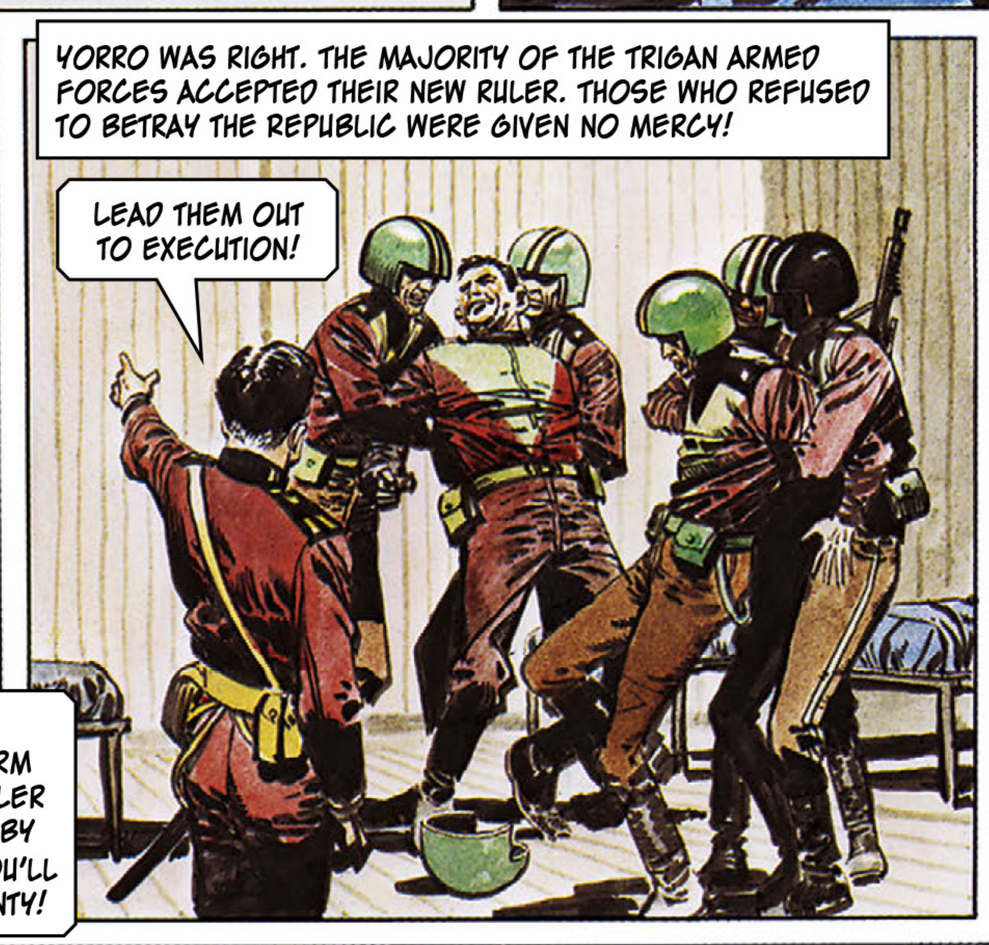
SLOWLY, MARSHAL ZEROS ROSE TO HIS FEET. AFTER A MOMENT'S SILENCE, HE SHOUTED ONE WORD.
NOW!
A TRAMP OF BOOTED FEET, THE JINGLE OF EQUIPMENT... AND ZEROS' BODYGUARDS FILED INTO THE HALL.
WHAT'S THIS? IS IT SOME KIND OF ELABORATE JEST?
ZEROS ANSWERED THE QUESTIONS.
THIS IS NO JEST, GENTLEMEN! YOU ARE ALL UNDER ARREST!
WHA-A-AT?
JANNO CAUGHT THE NOTE OF DESPERATE SERIOUSNESS IN ZEROS' VOICE. WITHOUT AN INSTANT'S HESITATION... HE ACTED!
SHOOT HIM DOWN!
JANNO RELEASED HIS HOLD... AND SMASHED HIS WAY OUT OF THE WINDOW, INTO THE NIGHT.
THE PANDEMONIUM IN THE GREAT HALL SUDDENLY SILENCED AS A STRANGE FIGURE ENTERED...
PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF... I AM YORRO. AS FROM THIS MOMENT, I AM YOUR NEW RULER... THE DICTATOR OF TRIGAN!

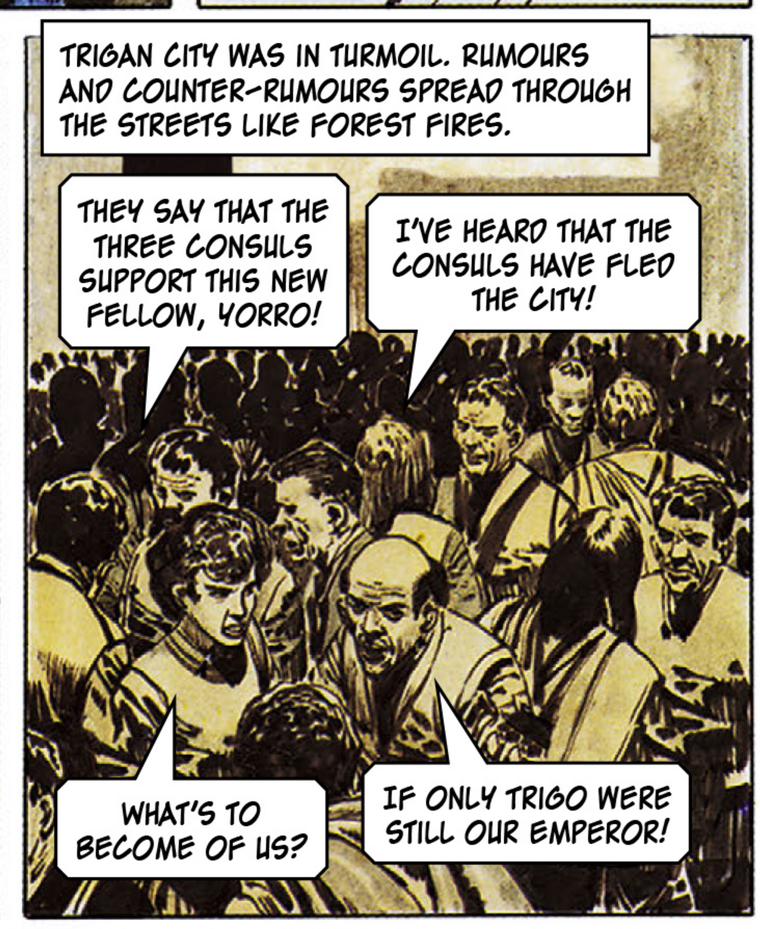
IN THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED, YORRO INDICATED THE ASSEMBLED SENIOR CITIZENS WITH A CONTEMPTUOUS SWEEP OF HIS HAND.
I CANNOT EXPECT ANY SUPPORT FROM THIS RABBLE! ORDER YOUR GUARDS TO PLACE THEM UNDER ARREST!

MARSHAL ZEROS HESITATED. BUT NOT FOR LONG...
OR DO YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR FORMER FRIENDS' IMPRISONMENT?
ER... GUARDS! DO YOUR DUTY!


THIS IS MADNESS! YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH IT! APART FROM MY OWN TRUSTED AIR FLEET BODYGUARDS, YOU HAVE NO FORCE TO OVERTHROW THE REPUBLIC!
YOU THINK NOT? YOU OLD FOOL!

YORRO HAD ONE WEAPON... HIS VAST FORTUNE.
EVERY MAN HAS HIS PRICE, AS YOU WELL KNOW! AT DAWN, YOU WILL INFORM THE ARMED FORCES THAT THEIR NEW RULER IS GRACIOUSLY INCREASING THEIR PAY BY TENFOLD OUT OF HIS OWN POCKET! YOU'LL FIND, THEN, THAT I HAVE FORCE IN PLENTY!


YORRO WAS RIGHT. THE MAJORITY OF THE TRIGAN ARMED FORCES ACCEPTED THEIR NEW RULER. THOSE WHO REFUSED TO BETRAY THE REPUBLIC WERE GIVEN NO MERCY!
LEAD THEM OUT TO EXECUTION!


TRIGAN CITY WAS IN TURMOIL. RUMOURS AND COUNTER-RUMOURS SPREAD THROUGH THE STREETS LIKE FOREST FIRES.
THEY SAY THAT THE THREE CONSULS SUPPORT THIS NEW FELLOW, YORRO!
I'VE HEARD THAT THE CONSULS HAVE FLED THE CITY!
WHAT'S TO BECOME OF US?
IF ONLY TRIGO WERE STILL OUR EMPEROR!

YORRO SILENCED ALL THEIR FEARS BY DRIVING IN STATE THROUGH THE STREET, WHILE GUARDS DISTRIBUTED HANDFULS OF MONEY TO THE POPULACE.

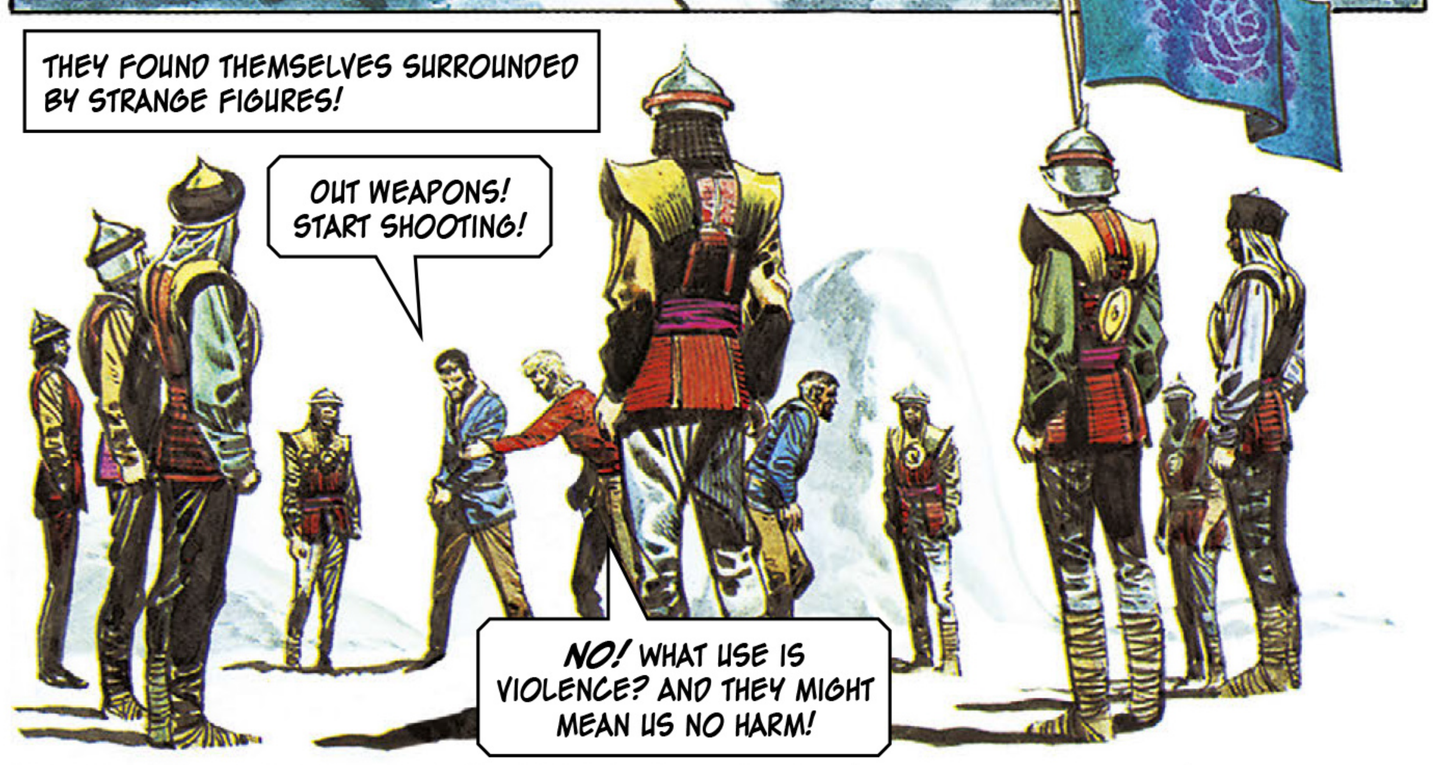
YORRO SMILED...
AYE, GROVEL, YOU ANIMALS! BEFORE LONG, I'LL HAVE YOU GROVELLING FOR YOUR LIVES!
MEANWHILE, YOUNG JANNO-WHO HAD ESCAPED IMPRISONMENT-HAD GONE INTO HIDING NEAR THE HARBOUR.
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING FOR IT... I MUST FIND UNCLE TRIGO AND BRING HIM BACK!
HE TOOK OUT A LETTER... THE LAST HE HAD RECEIVED FROM HIS EX-EMPEROR...
"...I WRITE THIS FROM ZEDD, WHICH IS THE LAST OUTPOST OF CIVILISATION ON THE FROZEN CONTINENT. TOMORROW, I SET OFF FOR THE GREAT ICE BARRIER IN SEARCH OF A SUPPOSEDLY EXTINCT RACE OF STRANGE CREATURES..."
IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, JANNO ENDURED HARDSHIP IN PLENTY IN THE GREAT ICE OCEAN... FISHING FOR THE GIANT NORVA...
THAT NIGHT, JANNO WENT ABOARD A SHIP WHICH WAS TO LEAVE FOR A FISHING VOYAGE IN THE GREAT ICE OCEAN.
AYE, LAD, AN EXTRA PAIR OF HANDS WON'T COME AMISS. ARE YOU USED TO HARDSHIP?
YES, CAPTAIN!
AT THE END OF THE YEAR, WHEN THE SHIP REACHED THE SHORES OF THE FROZEN CONTINENT, JANNO BADE GOODBYE TO THE GOOD-NATURED CAPTAIN.
I'LL BE SORRY TO LOSE YOU, LAD... BUT IF YOU MUST GO THROUGH WITH THIS MAD SCHEME OF YOURS...
I'VE NO CHOICE, CAPTAIN!
THEN HE SET OFF ON FOOT, THROUGH THE WORST TERRITORY ON THE PLANET ELEKTON, ON HIS PERILOUS QUEST.
FIRST, THE OUTPOST OF ZEDD... TO PICK UP MY UNCLE'S TRAIL...

FOR TWO DAYS AND NIGHTS, JANNO STRUGGLED ON. THEN, ON THE MORNING OF THE THIRD DAY, A MONSTROUS SHADOW WAS CAST OVER HIM!
AAAAAAAGGHH!
HE KNEW THE MASSIVE CREATURE TO BE ONE OF THE SAVAGE PREDATORS OF THE FROZEN CONTINENT... AND RAN FOR HIS LIFE!
GN-A-A-A-A-AAAGHH!
NEXT MOMENT, THE YOUNG TRIGAN STUMBLED AND FELL. HE FELT THE BRUTE'S HOT BREATH ON HIS FACE... BEFORE HE HEARD AN EXPLOSION!
THE GREAT BEAST TOPPLED AND LAY STILL... AND FROM OUT OF THE SWIRLING SNOW CAME A STRANGE-LOOKING CRAFT.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES! THANKS!
THE NEWCOMERS INTRODUCED THEMSELVES AS HUNTERS FROM ZEDD AND, EAGERLY, JANNO INFORMED THEM THAT HE HIMSELF WAS HEADING FOR THE OUTPOST.
YOU ARE A FOOL TO TRAVEL IN THE FROZEN CONTINENT ALONE AND UNARMED. THE TERRITORY SWARMS WITH PREDATORS. IT'S A WONDER YOU SURVIVED SO LONG!
MY MISSION IS ABSOLUTELY VITAL. CAN YOU POSSIBLY ESCORT ME TO ZEDD?
THE HUNTERS AGREED AND, SOME DAYS LATER, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THE LAST OUTPOST. JANNO LOOKED DOWN ON THE DRILLING RIGS WHICH DREW OUT THE PRECIOUS FLUID THAT FED THE ENGINES ON THE PLANET ELEKTON.
JANNO'S COMPANIONS HAD NO NEWS OF HIS UNCLE BUT THEY SUGGESTED THAT HE MAKE INQUIRIES IN ZEDD'S ONE AND ONLY INN.
THEY'RE A ROUGH-LOOKING LOT!

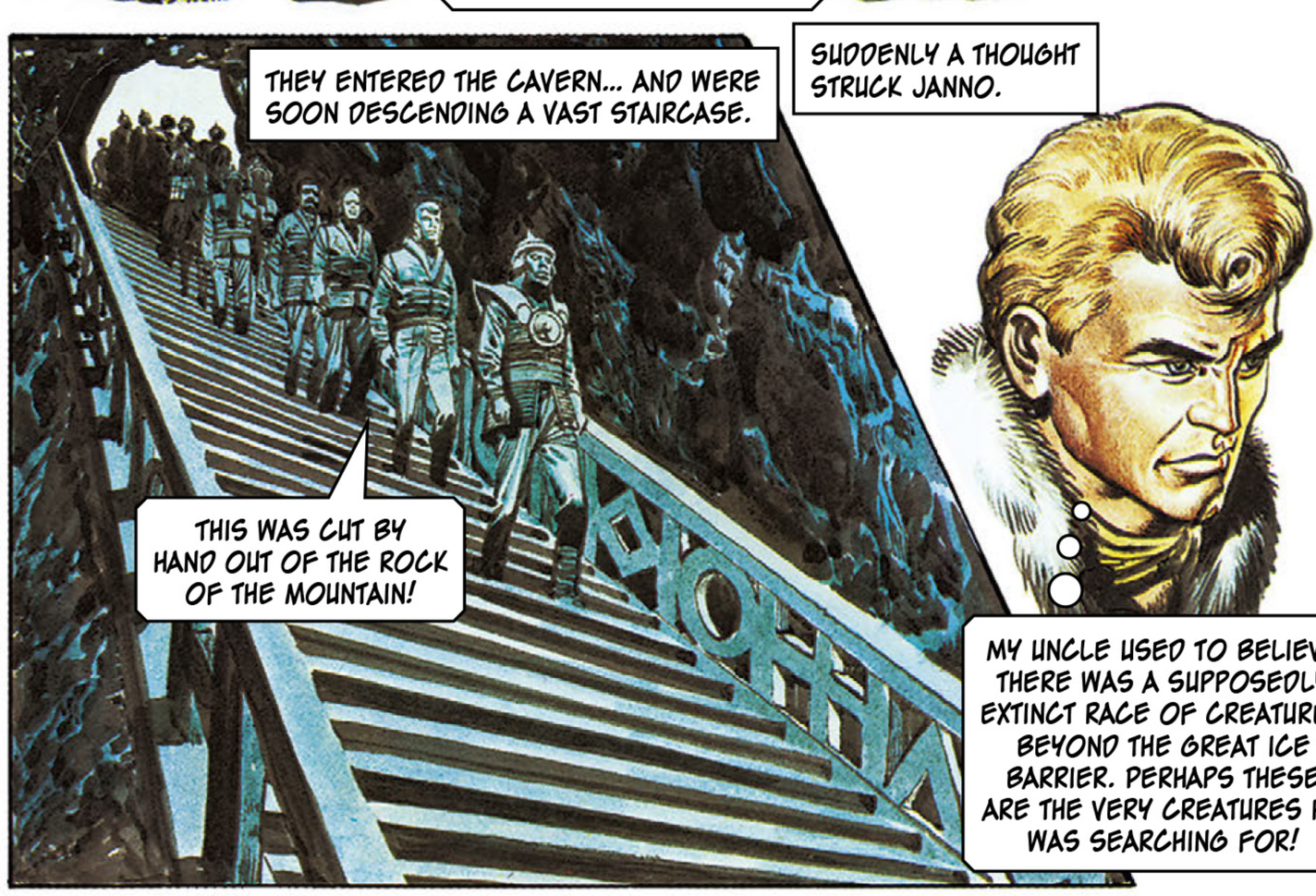
I SEEK NEWS OF MY UNCLE... THE EX-EMPEROR TRIGO. I BELIEVE HE PASSED THROUGH HERE.
YOU'LL FIND NO EMPERORS IN THIS ACCURSED HOLE... EX OR OTHERWISE!
WAIT! THERE WAS A STRANGER HERE!
YOU ONLY GET THE DREGS OF THE PLANET HERE, LAD... AND WE LIKE IT THAT WAY!
JANNO TURNED EAGERLY AND THE MAN AT THE TABLE DESCRIBED THE "STRANGER".
YES! YES! THAT WAS MY UNCLE!
WELL, HE LEFT FOR THE GREAT ICE BARRIER THREE LUNAR MONTHS AGO. HIRED A TRANSPORTER AND TWO GUIDES.
IF YOU WERE WANTING TO FOLLOW HIM, WE OWN A TRANSPORTER AND WE KNOW THE ROUTE.
YES! WHEN CAN WE LEAVE?
AS SOON AS YOU LIKE, LAD. NOW, IF YOU WANT!
SOME MOMENTS LATER, JANNO'S NEW ACQUAINTANCES MUTTERED TOGETHER.
THERE COULD BE A FORTUNE IN THIS FOR US!
SO HE'S LOOKING FOR AN EX-EMPEROR, EH? WELL, EX-EMPERORS COME EXPENSIVE... IN RANSOM MONEY, FOR INSTANCE. AND SO DO THEIR NEPHEWS!
THE THREE SET OFF IN A TRANSPORTER. TWO DAYS LATER, A FORBIDDING WALL OF WHITENESS BLANKED OUT THE SKY AHEAD OF THEM.
FROM HERE WE GO ON FOOT... OVER THE GREAT ICE BARRIER!
THE LONG GRUELLING CLIMB BEGAN.
AND THEY WERE WATCHED EVERY STEP OF THE WAY FROM THE HIGH CREST!

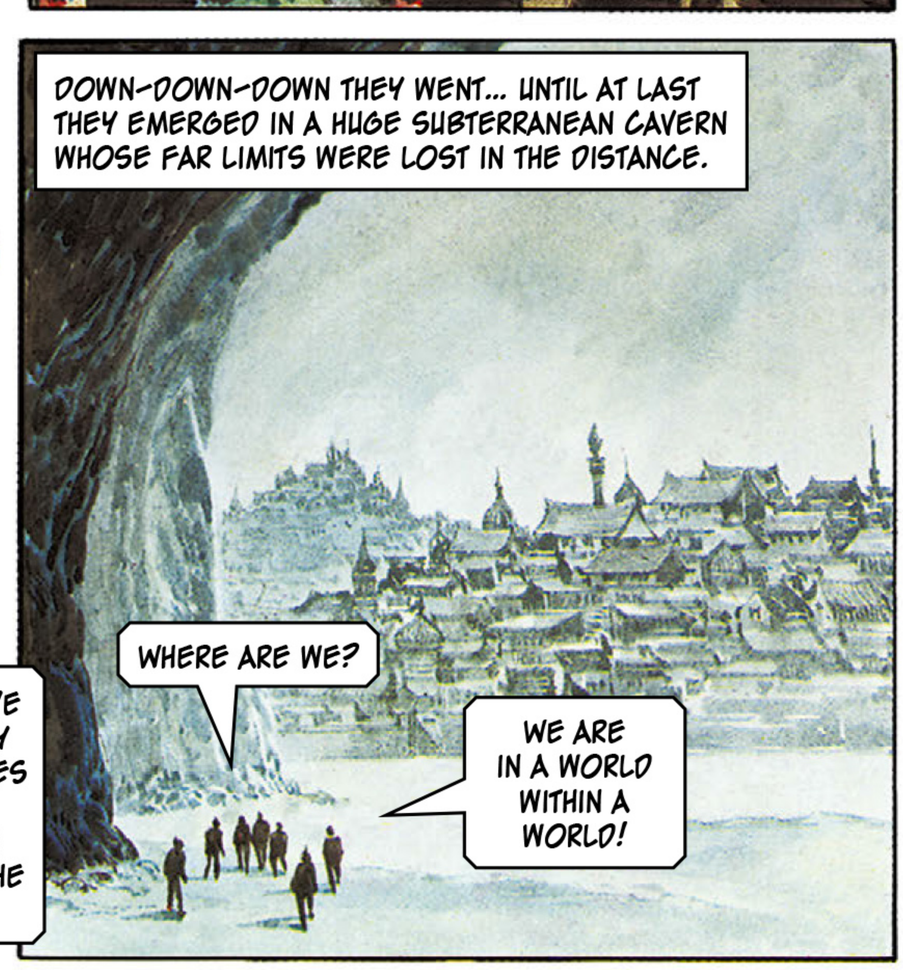
THE SHORT POLAR DAY WAS DYING WHEN THE THREE REACHED THE HIGH CREST OF THE GREAT ICE BARRIER AND LOOKED ABOUT THEM.
IT'S LIKE ANOTHER WORLD!

AND THEN...
BY ALL THE STARS!
WHO ARE THEY?


THEY FOUND THEMSELVES SURROUNDED BY STRANGE FIGURES!
OUT WEAPONS! START SHOOTING!
NO! WHAT USE IS VIOLENCE? AND THEY MIGHT MEAN US NO HARM!

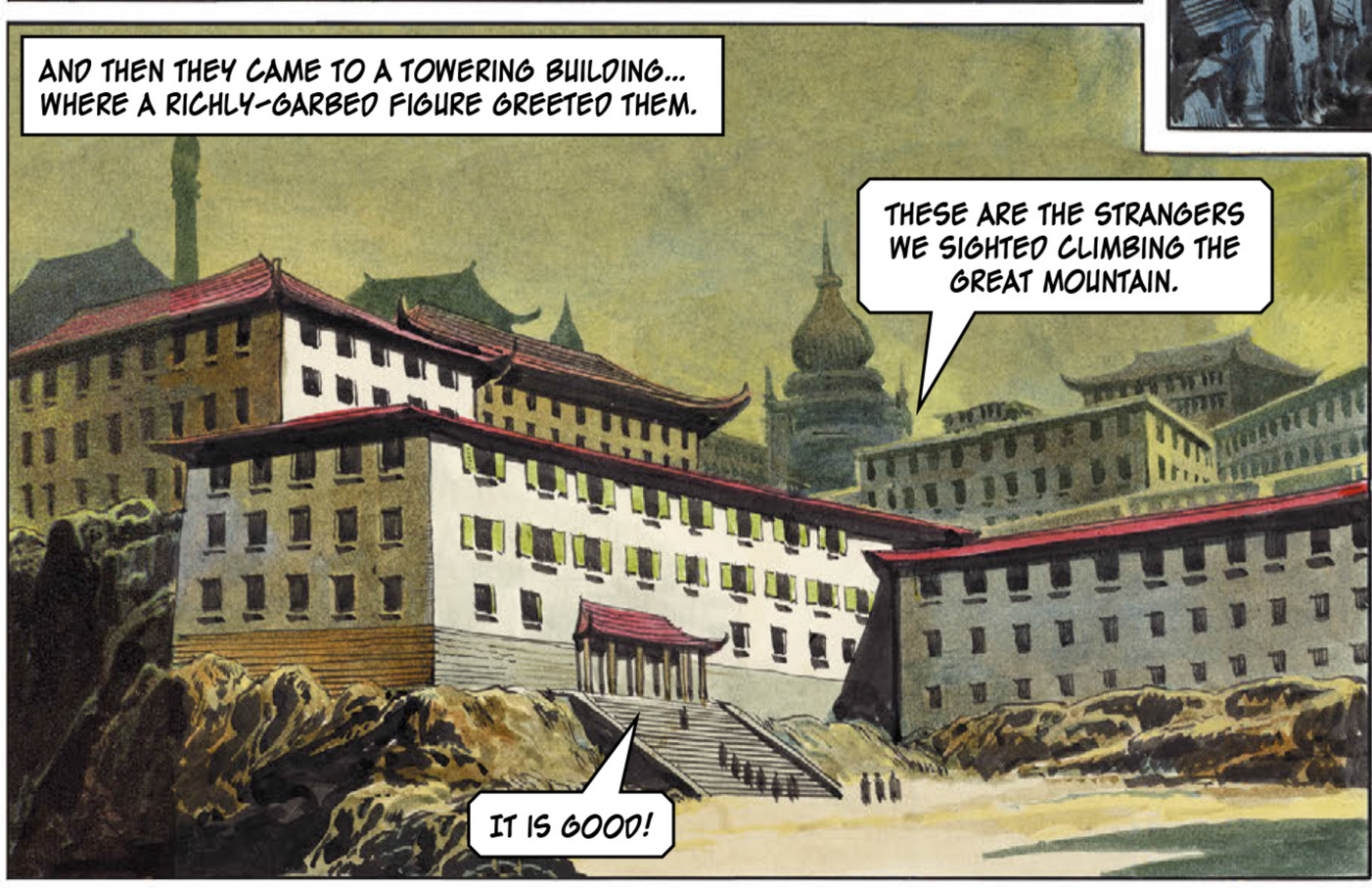
A GLOOMY CAVERN MOUTH WAS CARVED INTO ICY-COVERED ROCK NEARBY AND ONE OF THE STRANGERS POINTED TO IT.
HE WANTS US TO GO IN THERE. WHAT DO WE DO?
OBEY! WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?


THEY ENTERED THE CAVERN... AND WERE SOON DESCENDING A VAST STAIRCASE.
THIS WAS CUT BY HAND OUT OF THE ROCK OF THE MOUNTAIN!
SUDDENLY A THOUGHT STRUCK JANNO.
MY UNCLE USED TO BELIEVE THERE WAS A SUPPOSEDLY EXTINCT RACE OF CREATURES BEYOND THE GREAT ICE BARRIER. PERHAPS THESE ARE THE VERY CREATURES HE WAS SEARCHING FOR!


DOWN-DOWN-DOWN THEY WENT... UNTIL AT LAST THEY EMERGED IN A HUGE SUBTERRANEAN CAVERN WHOSE FAR LIMITS WERE LOST IN THE DISTANCE.
WHERE ARE WE?
WE ARE IN A WORLD WITHIN A WORLD!

ON MOUNTS THAT HAD BEEN TETHERED NEARBY, THEY WERE SOON RIDING THROUGH THE UNDERGROUND WORLD. THEY SAW MUCH OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR HABITATIONS.

THEY RODE THROUGH A GREAT ARCHWAY STUDDED WITH PRECIOUS STONES.
THOSE JEWELS! IF ONLY WE COULD MAKE OUR WAY BACK TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD WITH A HANDFUL OF THEM...
AYE! ALL ELEKTON WOULD BE OURS FOR THE ASKING!


AND THEN THEY CAME TO A TOWERING BUILDING... WHERE A RICHLY-GARBED FIGURE GREETED THEM.
THESE ARE THE STRANGERS WE SIGHTED CLIMBING THE GREAT MOUNTAIN.
IT IS GOOD!

JANNO AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE ADDRESSED IN THE COMMON LANGUAGE OF ELEKTON.
YOU WILL NOW BE TAKEN BEFORE OUR RULER... WHO WILL DECIDE YOUR FATES!

IN THE PALACE, THEY WERE LED THROUGH AN ECHOING HALL WHERE A FIGURE WAS SEATED AT THE FAR END. JANNO KNEW HIM INSTANTLY.
IT CAN'T BE! BUT IT IS... UNCLE TRIGO!
IT WAS INDEED THE EX-EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS... BUT HE GAVE NO SIGN OF RECOGNITION.
UNCLE! IT'S ME... YOUR NEPHEW, JANNO!

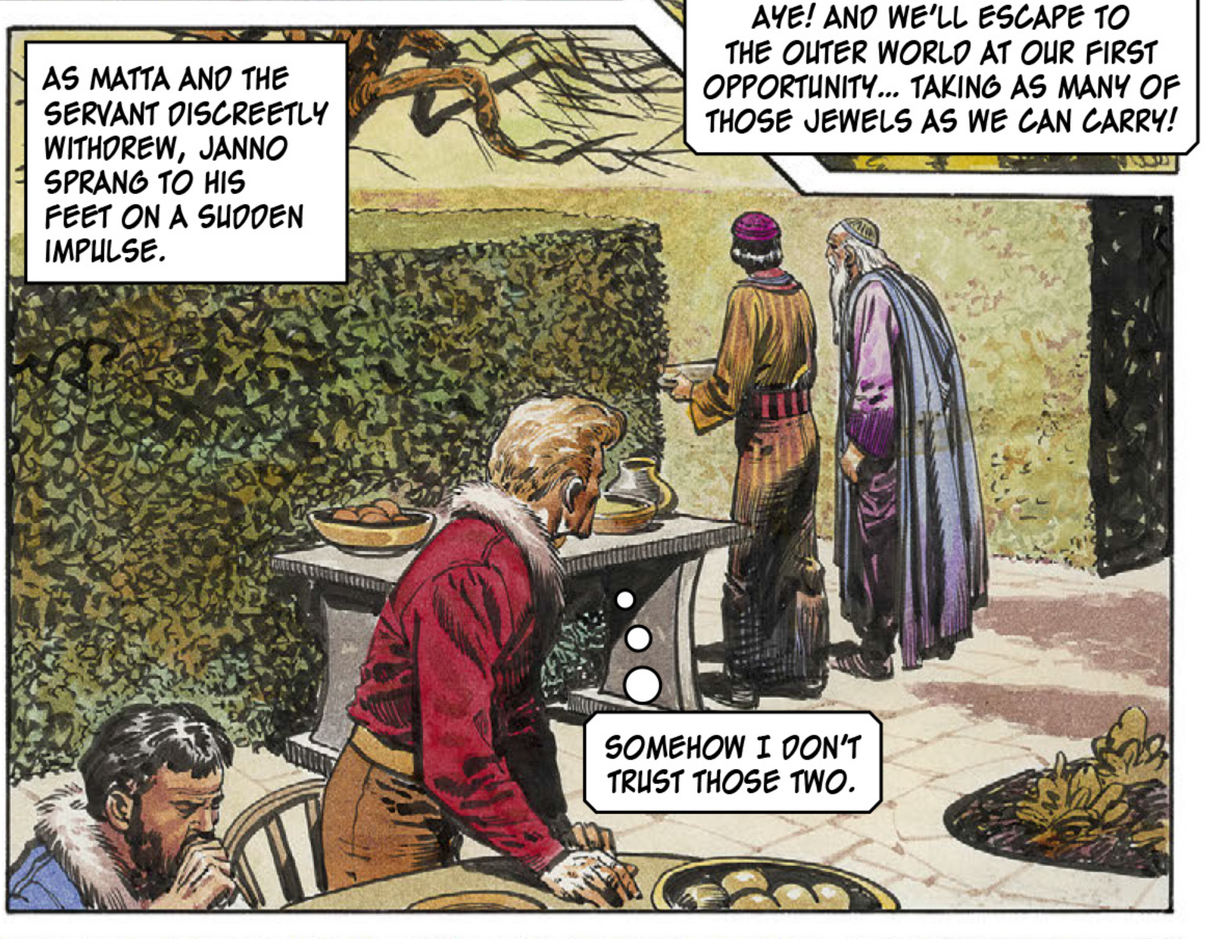
THE REPLY CAME LIKE A SMACK IN THE FACE OF THE YOUNG TRIGAN.
WHO IS THIS PERSON?

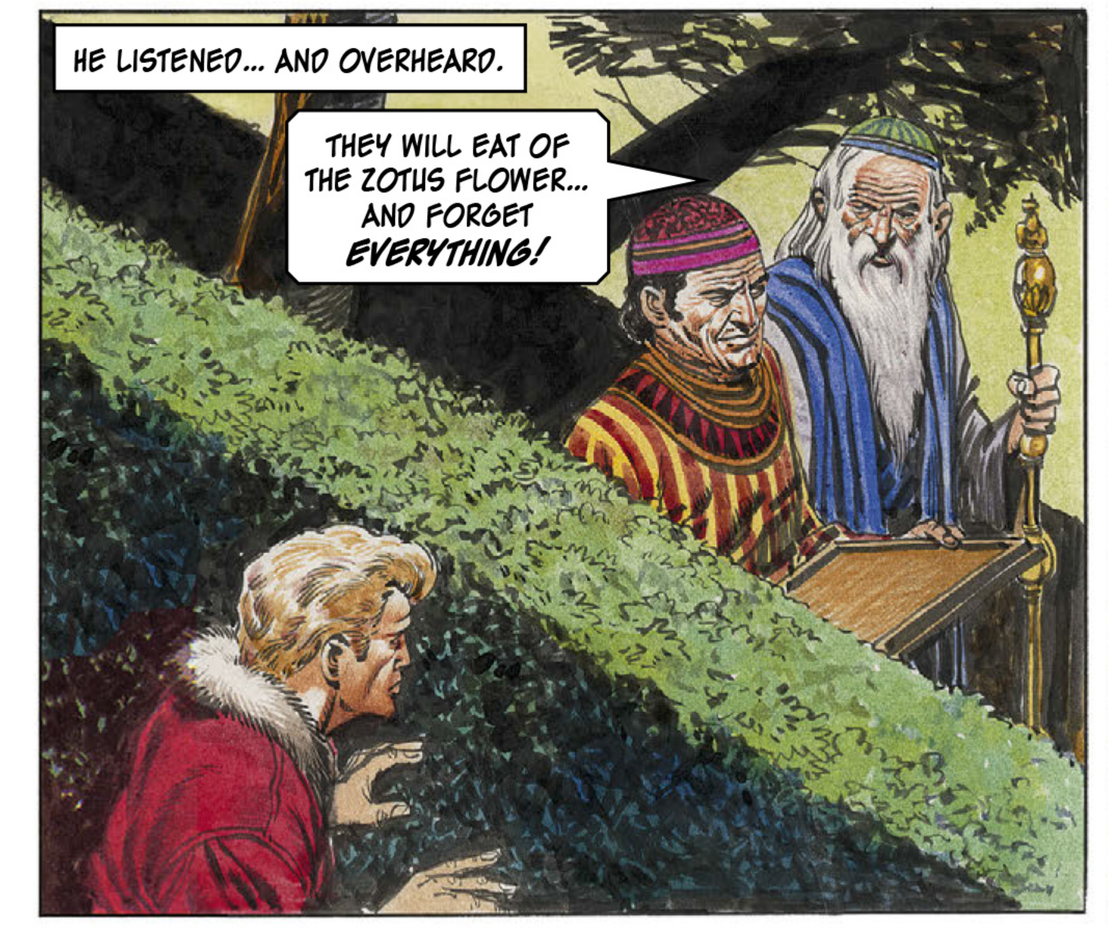
JANNO PERSISTED...BUT NOT A FLICKER OF RECOGNITION CROSSED THE FINE FACE OF THE EX-EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS.
UNCLE TRIGO! YOU CAN'T HAVE FORGOTTEN ME! I JOURNEYED HERE TO TAKE YOU BACK! YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!
WHAT IS THIS YOUTH BABBLING ABOUT? THIS IS MY COUNTRY... THIS WORLD WITHIN A WORLD!

HE DISMISSED THEM WITH AN IMPERIOUS GESTURE.
TAKE THEM AWAY, MATTA! SEE TO IT THAT THEY ARE TREATED WELL. I WILL DECIDE THEIR FATE LATER.

SOME TIME LATER, THE THREE WERE TAKEN TO A PLEASANT GARDEN... AND THE TWO RASCALLY GUIDES LOOKED ABOUT THEM WITH GREAT SATISFACTION.
WE'RE GOING TO BE WELL LOOKED AFTER HERE!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT... I SIMPLY DON'T BELIEVE IT!
AYE! AND WE'LL ESCAPE TO THE OUTER WORLD AT OUR FIRST OPPORTUNITY... TAKING AS MANY OF THOSE JEWELS AS WE CAN CARRY!

SUCCULENT-LOOKING FOOD WAS SET BEFORE THEM.
MMMMMM! ENOUGH TO MAKE A MAN'S MOUTH WATER!
YES... AND YOU WILL FIND THE ZOTUS FLOWER PARTICULARLY TASTEFUL.


AS MATTA AND THE SERVANT DISCREETLY WITHDREW, JANNO SPRANG TO HIS FEET ON A SUDDEN IMPULSE.
SOMEHOW I DON'T TRUST THOSE TWO.

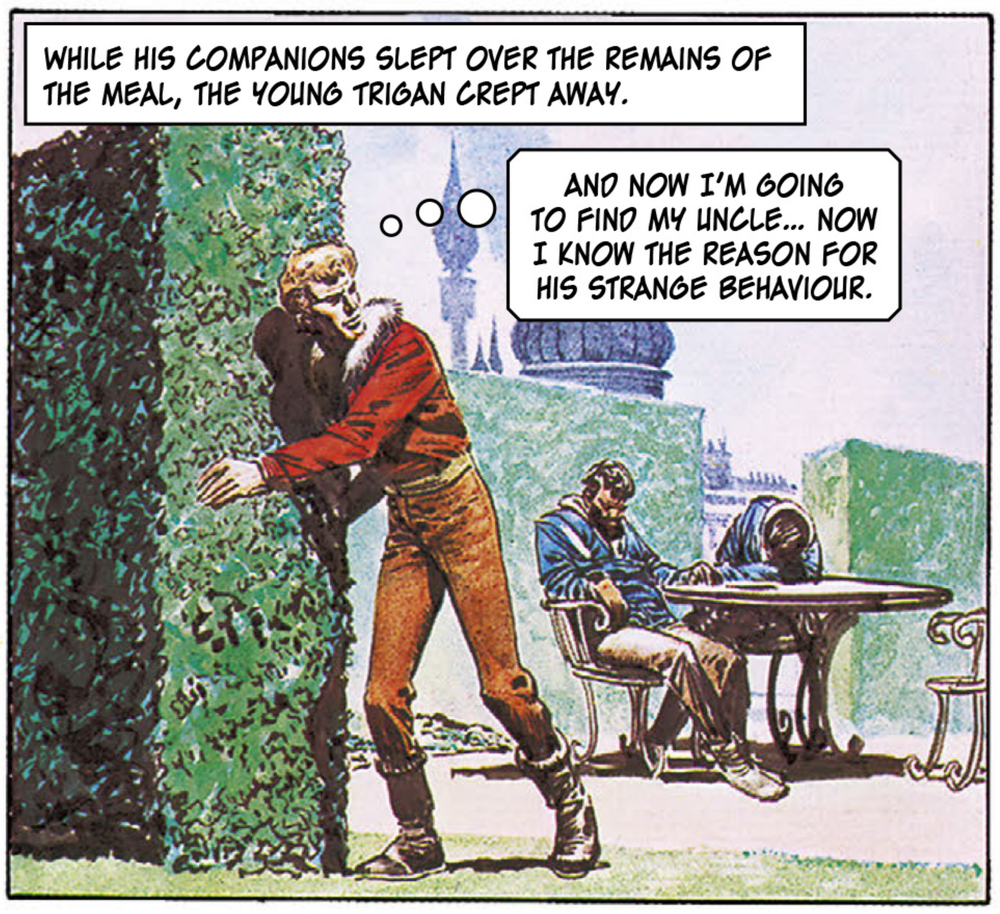

HE LISTENED... AND OVERHEARD.
THEY WILL EAT OF THE ZOTUS FLOWER... AND FORGET EVERYTHING!

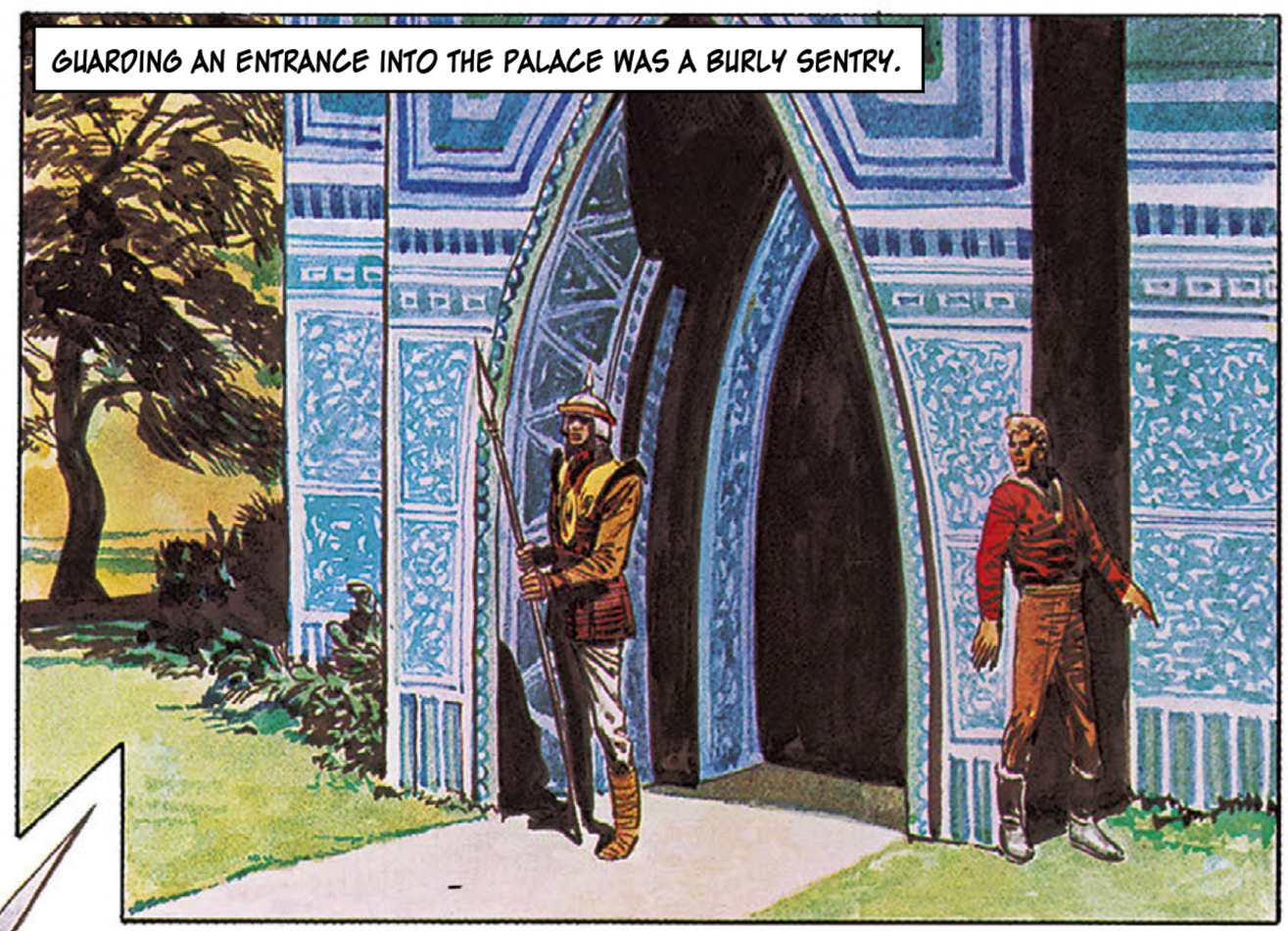
RETURNING TO HIS SEAT, HIS MIND RACING, JANNO SAW THAT HIS COMPANIONS WERE GORGING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT. BUT HE ATE SPARINGLY... AND NOT OF THE ZOTUS FLOWER!
MMMMH! THIS IS THE FOOD OF THE GODS!

THE MEAL OVER, JANNO LEANED FORWARD.
TELL ME... HOW DO YOU INTEND TO ESCAPE TO THE OUTER WORLD?
ESCAPE? WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT?

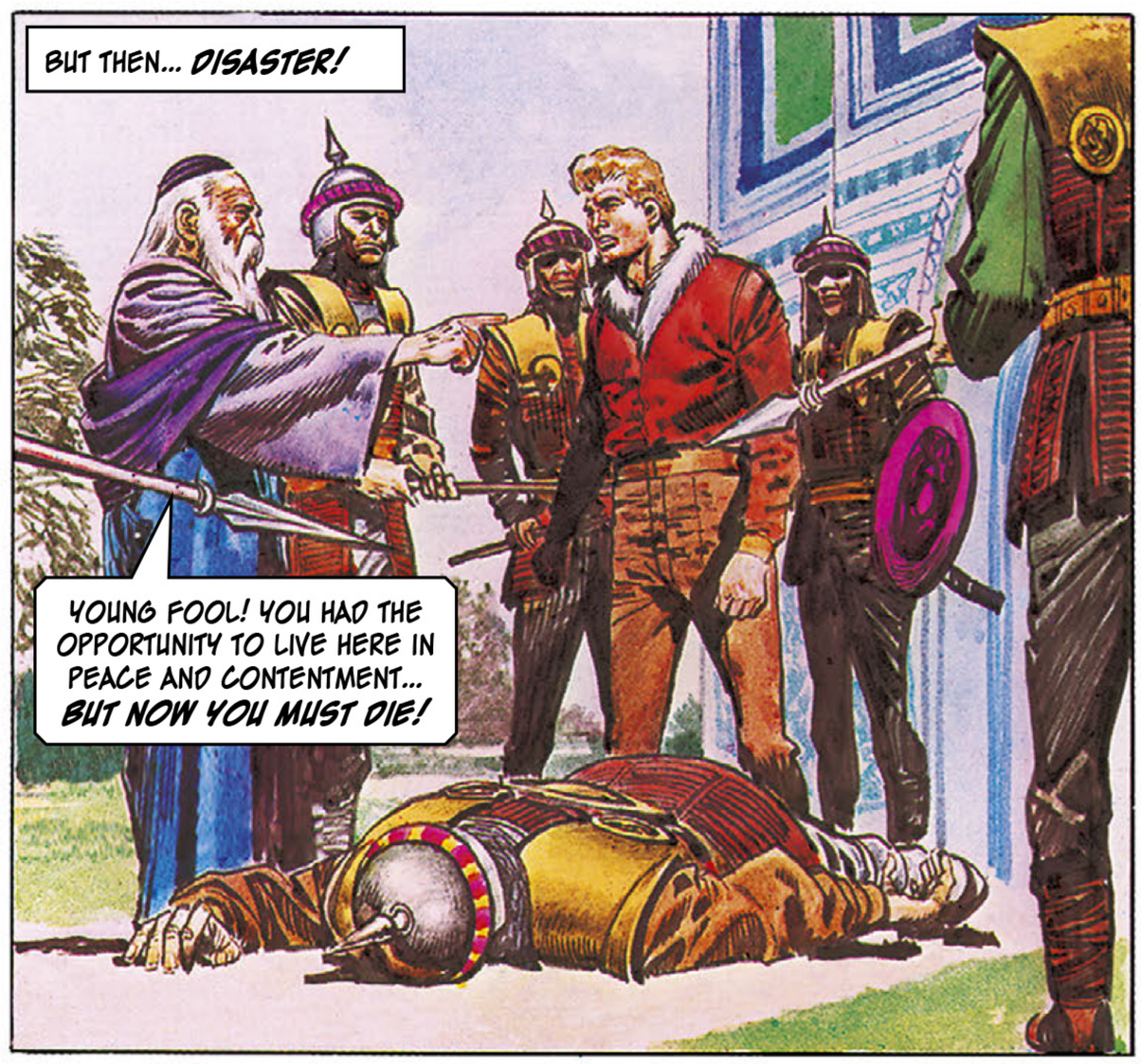
THEIR SURPRISING REPLIES ASTOUNDED HIM.
ESCAPE? TO WHERE?
THIS IS OUR HOMELAND. WHY SHOULD WE WISH TO BE ELSEWHERE?

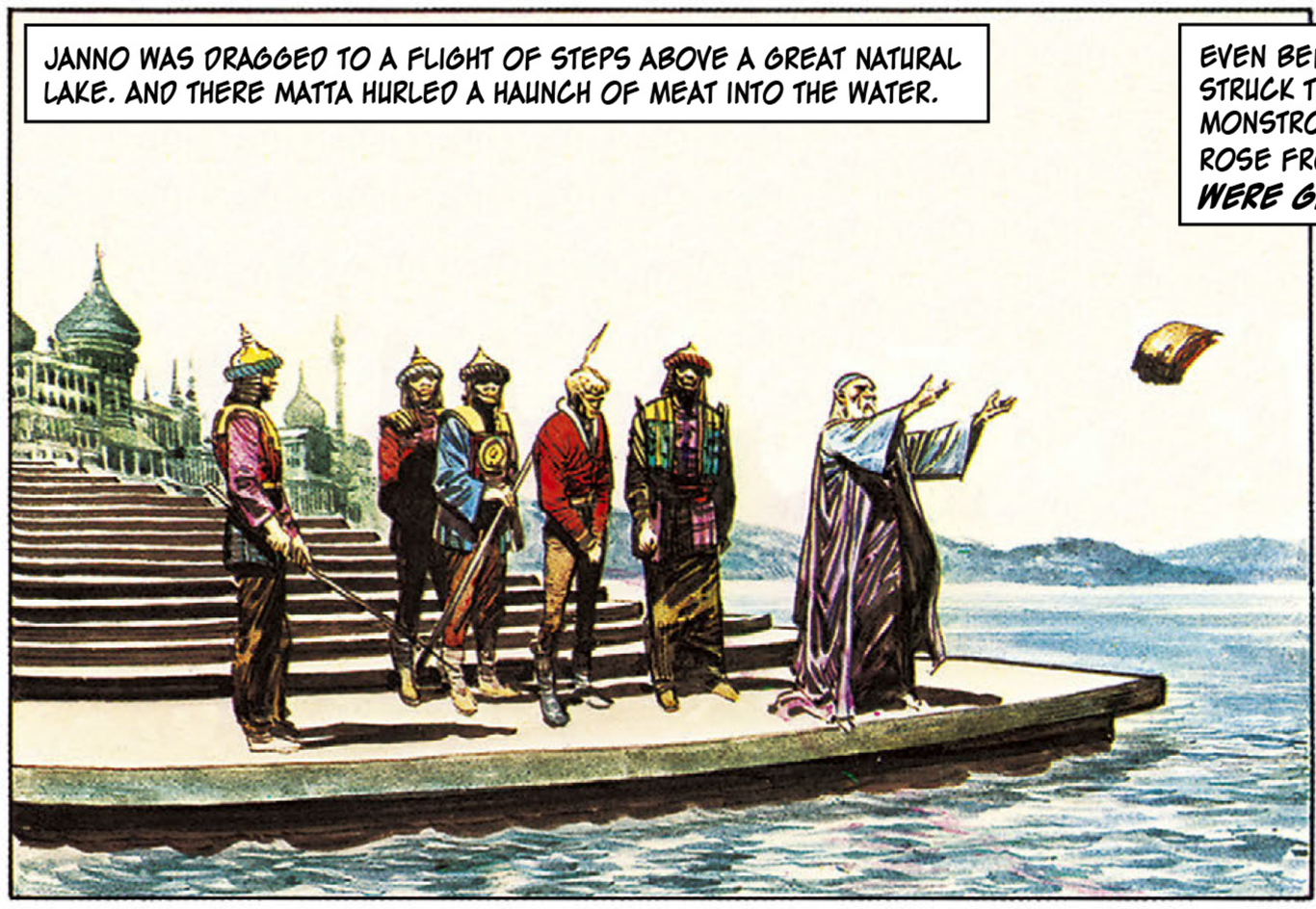
THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN WHO THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY COME FROM!

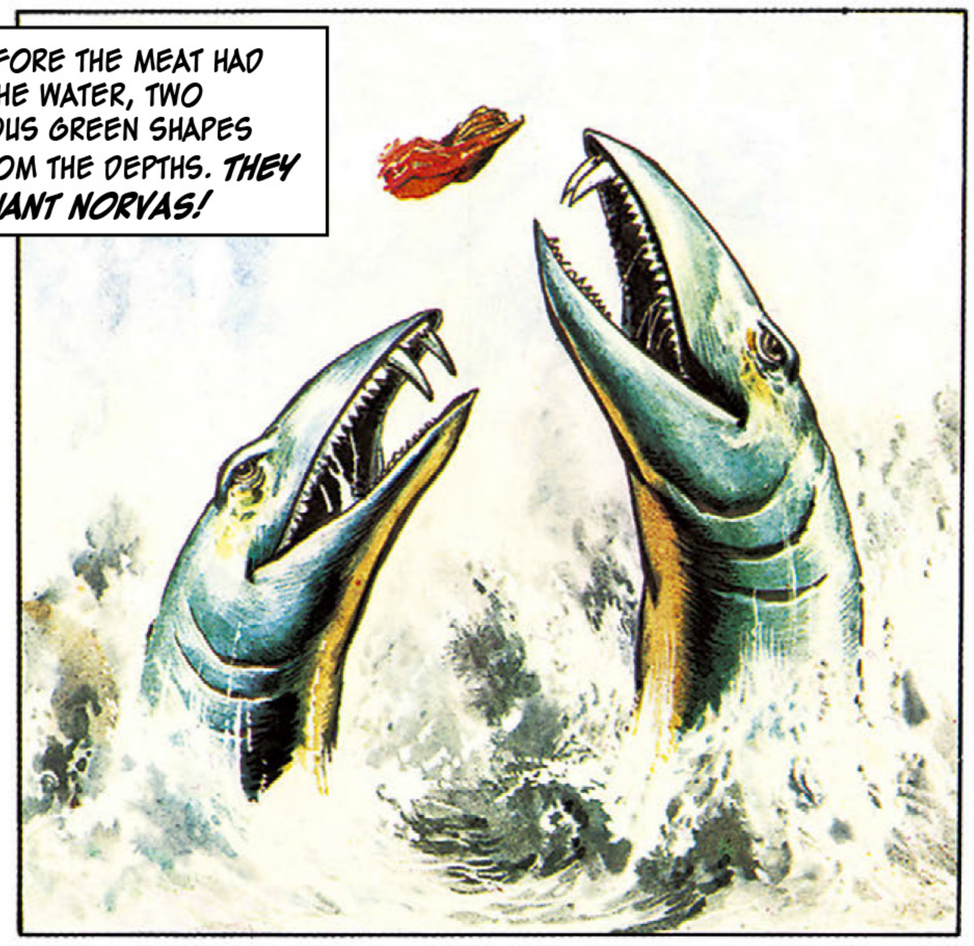

WHILE HIS COMPANIONS SLEPT OVER THE REMAINS OF THE MEAL, THE YOUNG TRIGAN CREPT AWAY.
AND NOW I'M GOING TO FIND MY UNCLE... NOW I KNOW THE REASON FOR HIS STRANGE BEHAVIOUR.


GUARDING AN ENTRANCE INTO THE PALACE WAS A BURLY SENTRY.

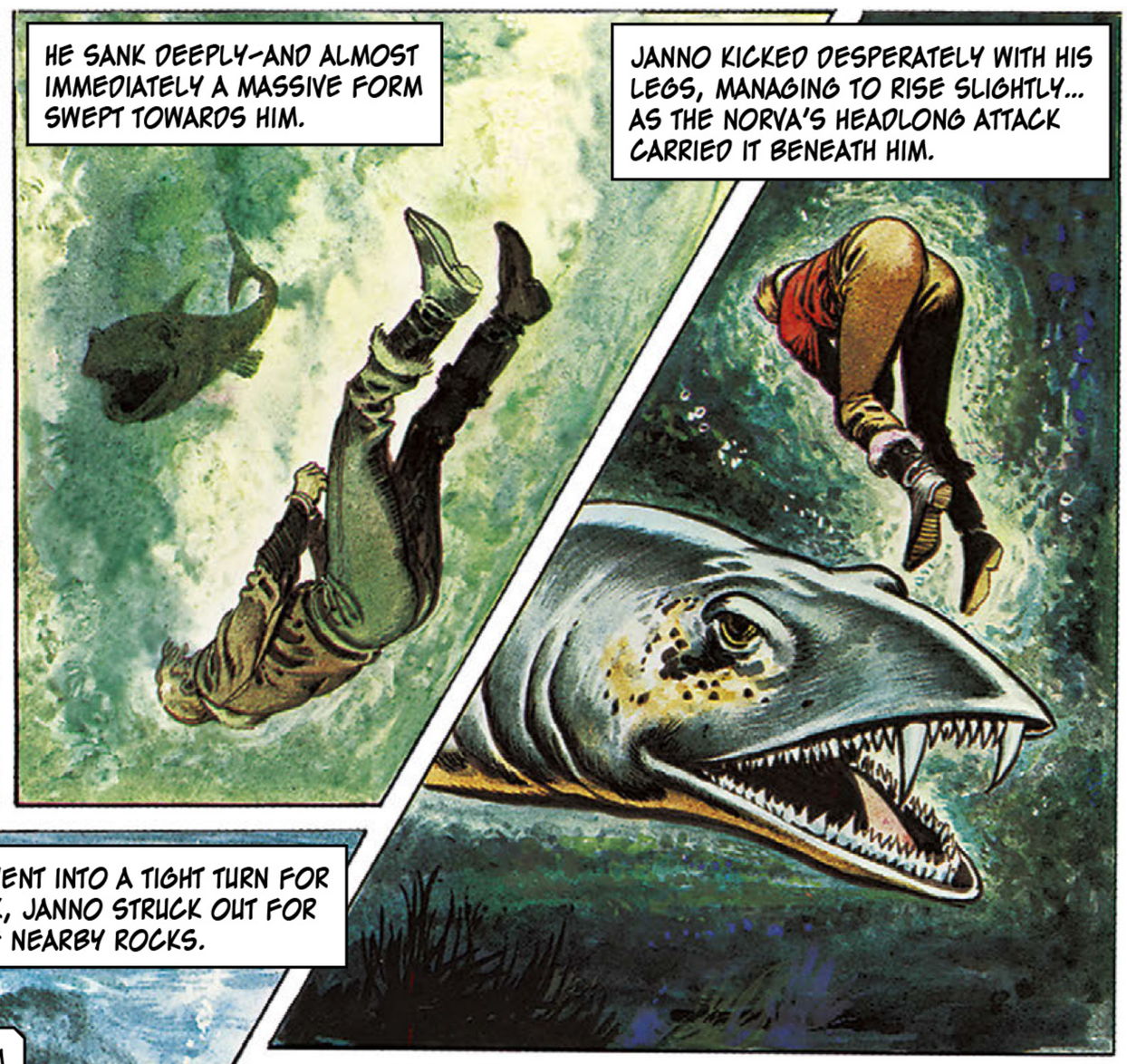
JANNO ACTED.
UUGGGHH!


BUT THEN... DISASTER!
YOUNG FOOL! YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE HERE IN PEACE AND CONTENTMENT... BUT NOW YOU MUST DIE!

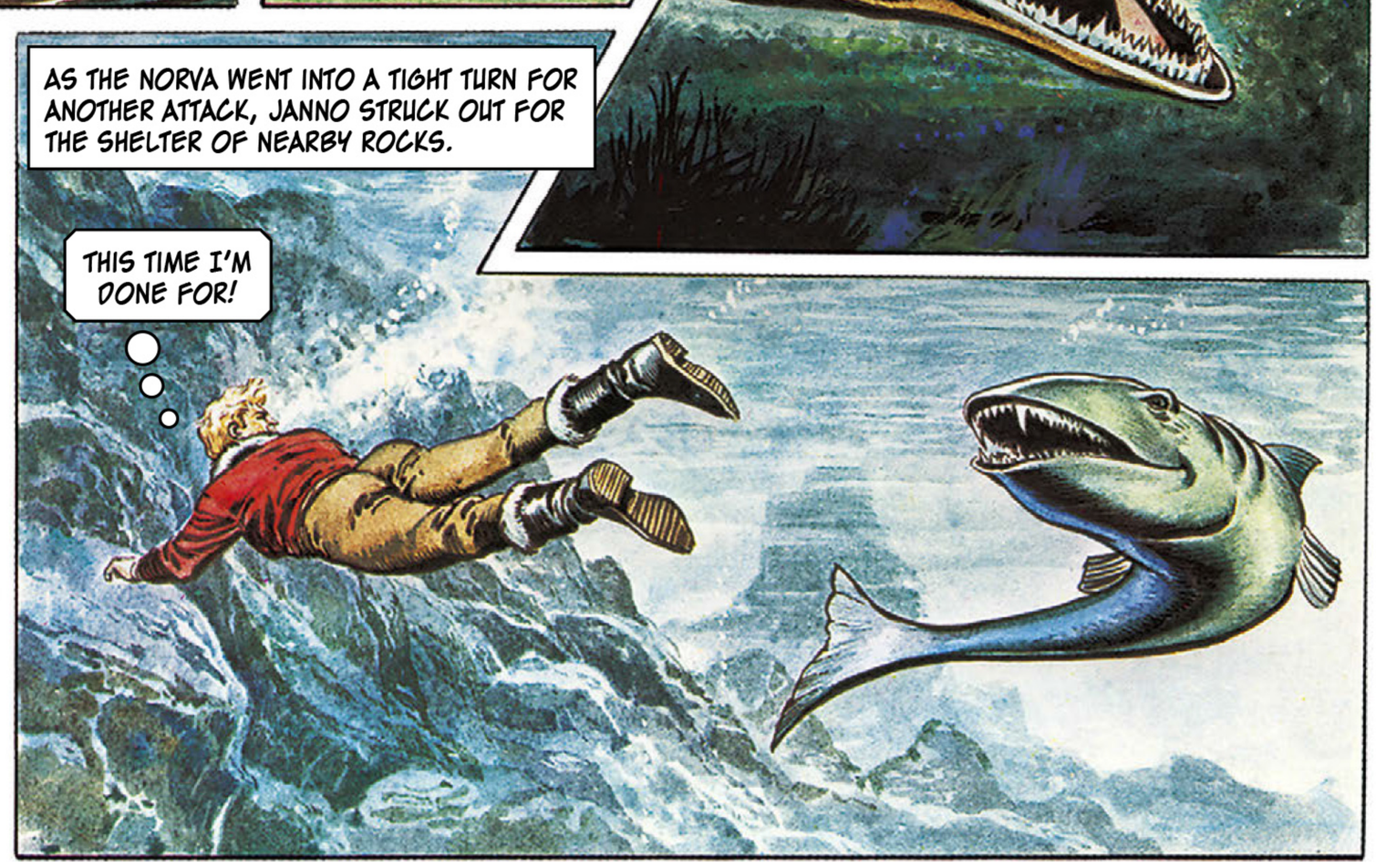

JANNO WAS DRAGGED TO A FLIGHT OF STEPS ABOVE A GREAT NATURAL LAKE. AND THERE MATTA HURLED A HAUNCH OF MEAT INTO THE WATER.

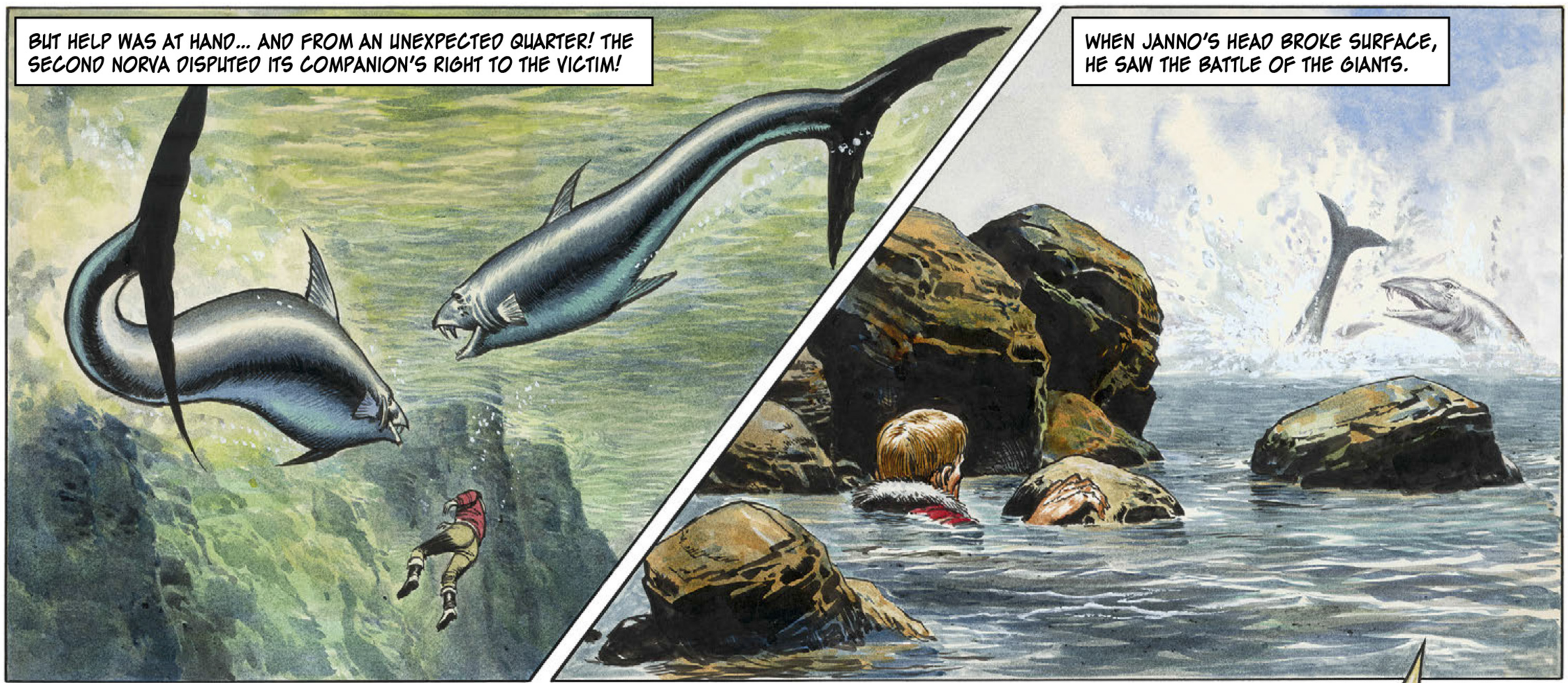

EVEN BEFORE THE MEAT HAD STRUCK THE WATER, TWO MONSTROUS GREEN SHAPES ROSE FROM THE DEPTHS. THEY WERE GIANT NORVAS!

AND THEN...
AAAAAHHH!
IN YOU GO!

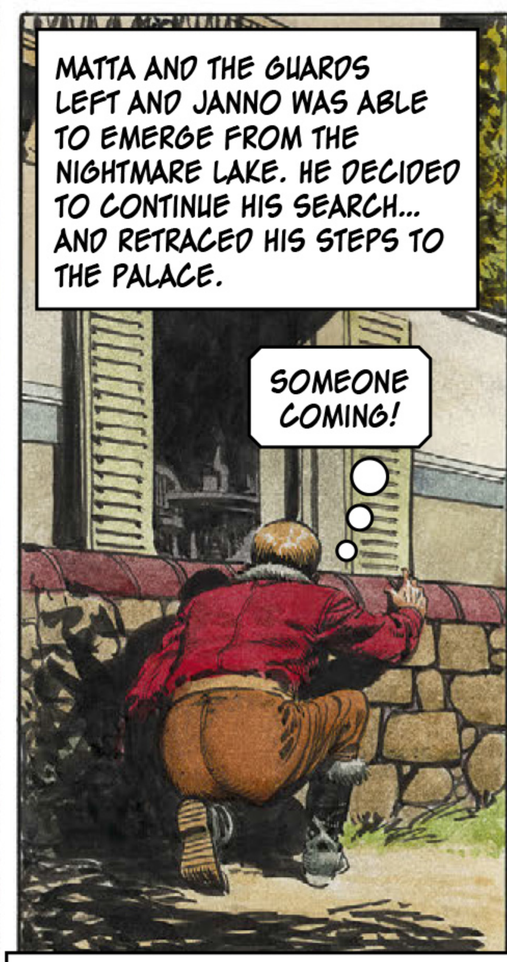

HE SANK DEEPLY—AND ALMOST IMMEDIATELY A MASSIVE FORM SWEPT TOWARDS HIM.
JANNO KICKED DESPERATELY WITH HIS LEGS, MANAGING TO RISE SLIGHTLY... AS THE NORVA'S HEADLONG ATTACK CARRIED IT BENEATH HIM.

SPUN ROUND BY THE VIOLENT TURBULENCE OF THE CREATURE'S PASSING, HE SAW THE RAZOR-EDGED TAIL-FIN, REACHED OUT HIS ARMS... AND SUDDENLY HIS HANDS WERE FREE.


AS THE NORVA WENT INTO A TIGHT TURN FOR ANOTHER ATTACK, JANNO STRUCK OUT FOR THE SHELTER OF NEARBY ROCKS.
THIS TIME I'M DONE FOR!


BUT HELP WAS AT HAND... AND FROM AN UNEXPECTED QUARTER! THE SECOND NORVA DISPUTED ITS COMPANION'S RIGHT TO THE VICTIM!
WHEN JANNO'S HEAD BROKE SURFACE, HE SAW THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS.

HE HEARD THE VOICE OF MATTA.
IT IS ALL OVER WITH HIM.


MATTA AND THE GUARDS LEFT AND JANNO WAS ABLE TO EMERGE FROM THE NIGHTMARE LAKE. HE DECIDED TO CONTINUE HIS SEARCH... AND RETRACED HIS STEPS TO THE PALACE.
SOMEONE COMING!

HE HEARD A SENTRY'S CHALLENGE... AND THE REPLY.
WHO COMES?
THE RULER'S SERVANT. I BRING A MEAL FOR THE EXCELLENT ONE.

JANNO WAS ABLE TO FOLLOW THE SERVANT TILL HE ENTERED A RICHLY-CARVED DOOR.
MY UNCLE'S APARTMENTS!

SOME TIME LATER, AS THE EX-EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN HIS MEAL, JANNO LUNGED FORWARD.

AAAAGGHH!

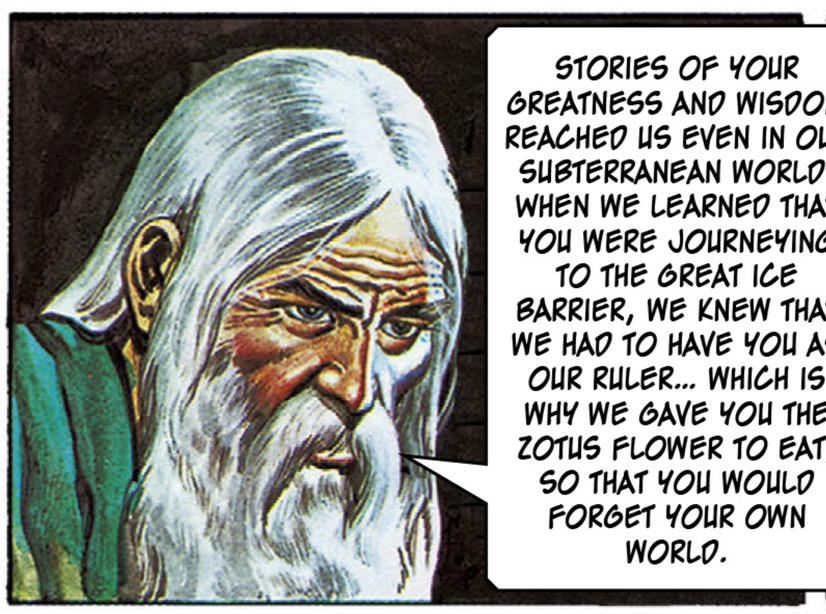
BORNE DOWN BY THE IMPACT OF HIS NEPHEW'S MUSCULAR FORM, TRIGO STRUCK HIS HEAD WITH STUNNING FORCE. HE LAY SENSELESS AMONG THE ZOTUS FLOWERS.
AND NOW TO GET HIM AWAY FROM HERE!
BUT THE SOUND HAD REACHED THE EARS OF A SENTRY. THERE CAME A POUNDING ON THE DOOR OF THE CHAMBER.
IS ALL WELL, EXCELLENT ONE?
JANNO PITCHED HIS VOICE DEEPLY IN IMITATION OF TRIGO'S.
YES! GO AWAY! LEAVE ME IN PEACE!
HE BOUND AND GAGGED HIS UNCLE WITH STRIPS OF CLOTH, THEN CROSSED TO THE WINDOW BY WHICH HE HAD ENTERED THE CHAMBER. BUT...
TEN THOUSAND CURSES! TRAPPED!
IN THE COURT BEYOND, A PARTY OF GUARDS WAS AT DRILL!
JANNO SLUMPED DOWN TO WAIT FOR THE GUARDS TO GO AWAY. WORN OUT BY THE VIOLENT EXERTIONS OF THE PAST DAYS, HE WAS SOON ASLEEP.
LATER—MUCH LATER—HE AWOKE TO SEE HIS UNCLE'S EYES FIXED UPON HIM. RUSHING TO TRIGO'S SIDE, HE UNFASTENED THE GAG, AND...
JANNO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, LAD?
UNCLE! THE STARS BE PRAISED! YOUR MEMORY HAS RETURNED! THE EFFECTS OF THE ZOTUS MUST WEAR OFF QUICKLY!
EXPLANATIONS FOLLOWED. TRIGO HAD A HALF-REMEMBRANCE OF HIS TIME IN THE WORLD WITHIN A WORLD.
THE SITUATION IN TRIGAN DEMANDS YOUR IMMEDIATE RETURN! ONLY YOU CAN SAVE WHAT IS LEFT OF THE REPUBLIC.
YES! I'LL RETURN WITH YOU... BUT WE CAN'T RELY ON THESE PEOPLE TO LET US LEAVE OF OUR OWN FREE WILL.

THE COURT WAS EMPTY AS UNCLE AND NEPHEW LEFT BY THE WINDOW AND STOLE OUT OF THE PALACE.
WE'LL FIND OURSELVES A PAIR OF GOOD MOUNTS AND RIDE FOR THE EXIT TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
SOME TIME LATER, MOUNTED ON SPEEDY KREEDS, THEY WERE THUNDERING ACROSS THE SUBTERRANEAN PLAIN. BUT SOON...
IT'S THE ALARM! THEY'RE LOOKING FOR ME!
WITHIN A SHORT TIME, A COHORT OF GUARDS WAS IN HOT PURSUIT OF THE RUNAWAYS.
THEY WENT THAT WAY, MASTER! TWO MEN FROM THE OUTER WORLD!
TWO MEN?
THE TRIGANS REACHED THE VAST STAIRCASE CARVED FROM THE LIVING ROCK... AND THEY RACED TO THE TOP.
THEY EMERGED INTO THE ICY BLAST OF THE GREAT ICE BARRIER.
THEY'LL BE ON OUR HEELS! LET'S GO THAT WAY... AND QUICKLY!
HAND OVER HAND, UNCLE AND NEPHEW CLAWED THEIR WAY DOWN THE ICE-COVERED MOUNTAIN FACE. AND THEN... DISASTER!
AAAAHHHHHH!

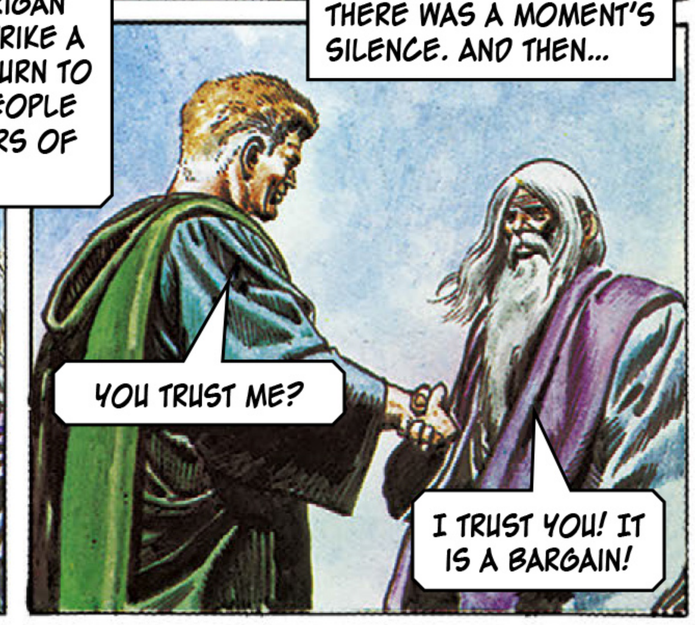
JANNO'S CARTWHEELING FORM STRUCK THE EDGE OF A STEEP-SIDED GLACIER... AND HE WAS CARRIED DOWN, DOWN, DOWN...

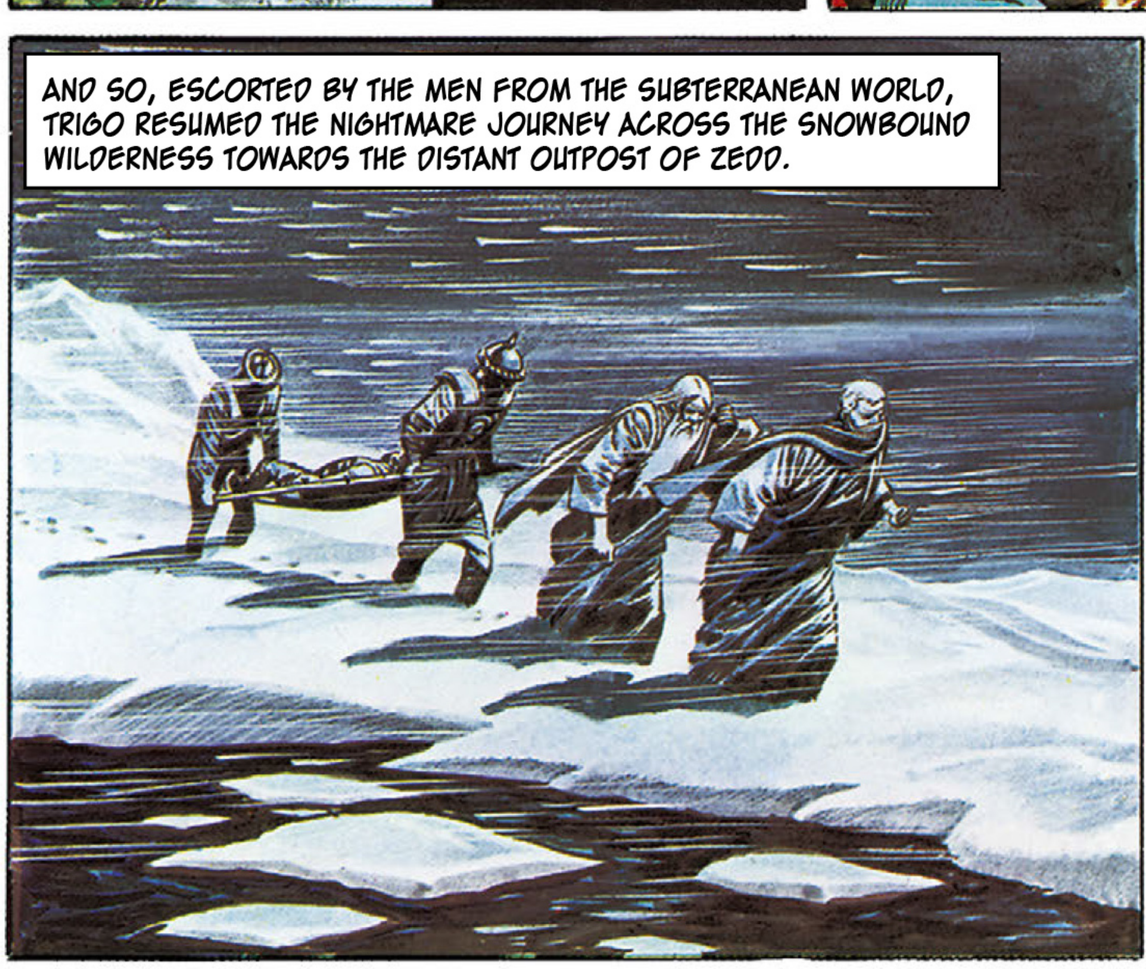
TRIGO DESCENDED WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY AND ELEKTON'S SUNS WERE LOW ON THE HORIZON WHEN, AT LAST, HE KNELT BESIDE THE HUDDLED FIGURE AT THE END OF THE GLACIER.
HE'S STILL ALIVE! THANK THE STARS!

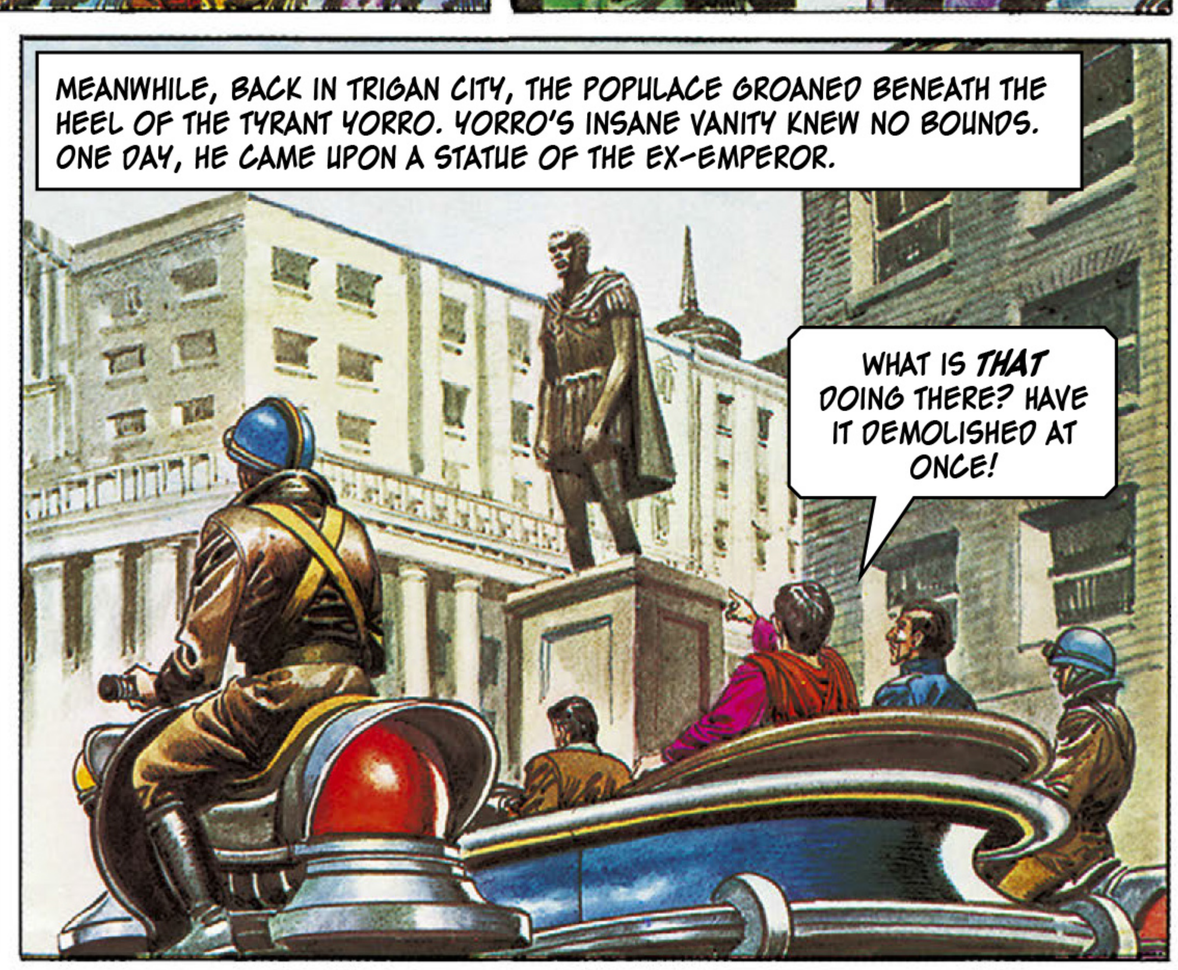
HOISTING HIS NEPHEW'S LIMP FORM ON TO HIS BROAD BACK, TRIGO SET OFF THROUGH DRIVING SNOW. BUT HE HAD NOT GONE FAR WHEN...
MATTA! SO YOU HAVE OVERTAKEN ME!
YES, EXCELLENT ONE. AND NOW-WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT-I MUST ASK YOU TO ACCOMPANY US BACK TO THE WORLD WITHIN THE WORLD. WE NEED YOU THERE.


STORIES OF YOUR GREATNESS AND WISDOM REACHED US EVEN IN OUR SUBTERRANEAN WORLD. WHEN WE LEARNED THAT YOU WERE JOURNEYING TO THE GREAT ICE BARRIER, WE KNEW THAT WE HAD TO HAVE YOU AS OUR RULER... WHICH IS WHY WE GAVE YOU THE ZOTUS FLOWER TO EAT, SO THAT YOU WOULD FORGET YOUR OWN WORLD.

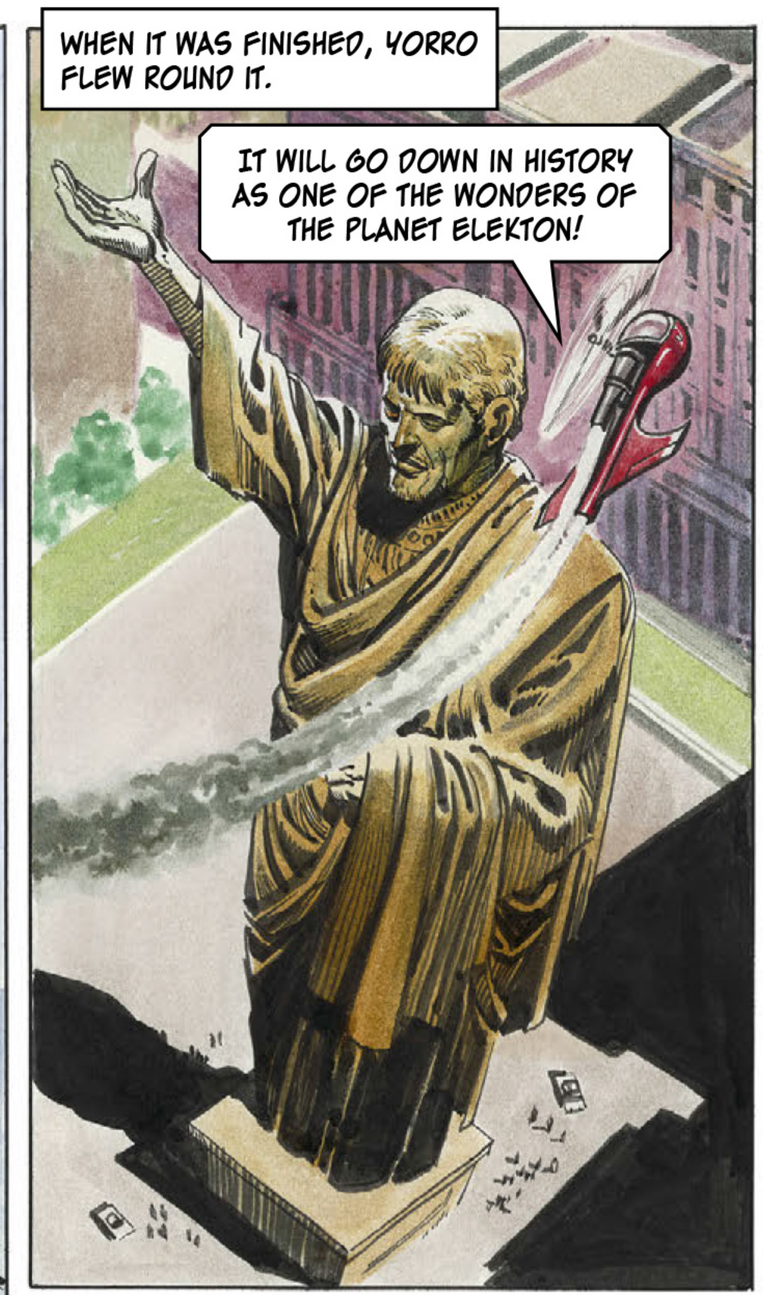
TRIGO ANSWERED GRAVELY.
BUT I AM NEEDED BACK IN TRIGAN CITY. LISTEN, MATTA, I WILL STRIKE A BARGAIN WITH YOU. LET ME RETURN TO MY OWN PEOPLE AND YOUR PEOPLE WILL BE ADMITTED AS MEMBERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.


THERE WAS A MOMENT'S SILENCE. AND THEN...
YOU TRUST ME?
I TRUST YOU! IT IS A BARGAIN!


AND SO, ESCORTED BY THE MEN FROM THE SUBTERRANEAN WORLD, TRIGO RESUMED THE NIGHTMARE JOURNEY ACROSS THE SNOWBOUND WILDERNESS TOWARDS THE DISTANT OUTPOST OF ZEDD.


MEANWHILE, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE POPULACE GROANED BENEATH THE HEEL OF THE TYRANT YORRO. YORRO'S INSANE VANITY KNEW NO BOUNDS. ONE DAY, HE CAME UPON A STATUE OF THE EX-EMPEROR.
WHAT IS THAT DOING THERE? HAVE IT DEMOLISHED AT ONCE!

IN THE PLACE OF TRIGO'S STATUE, AN ARMY OF FREE CITIZENS WAS FORCED TO SLAVE ON A MONSTROUS FIGURE OF THE TYRANT.

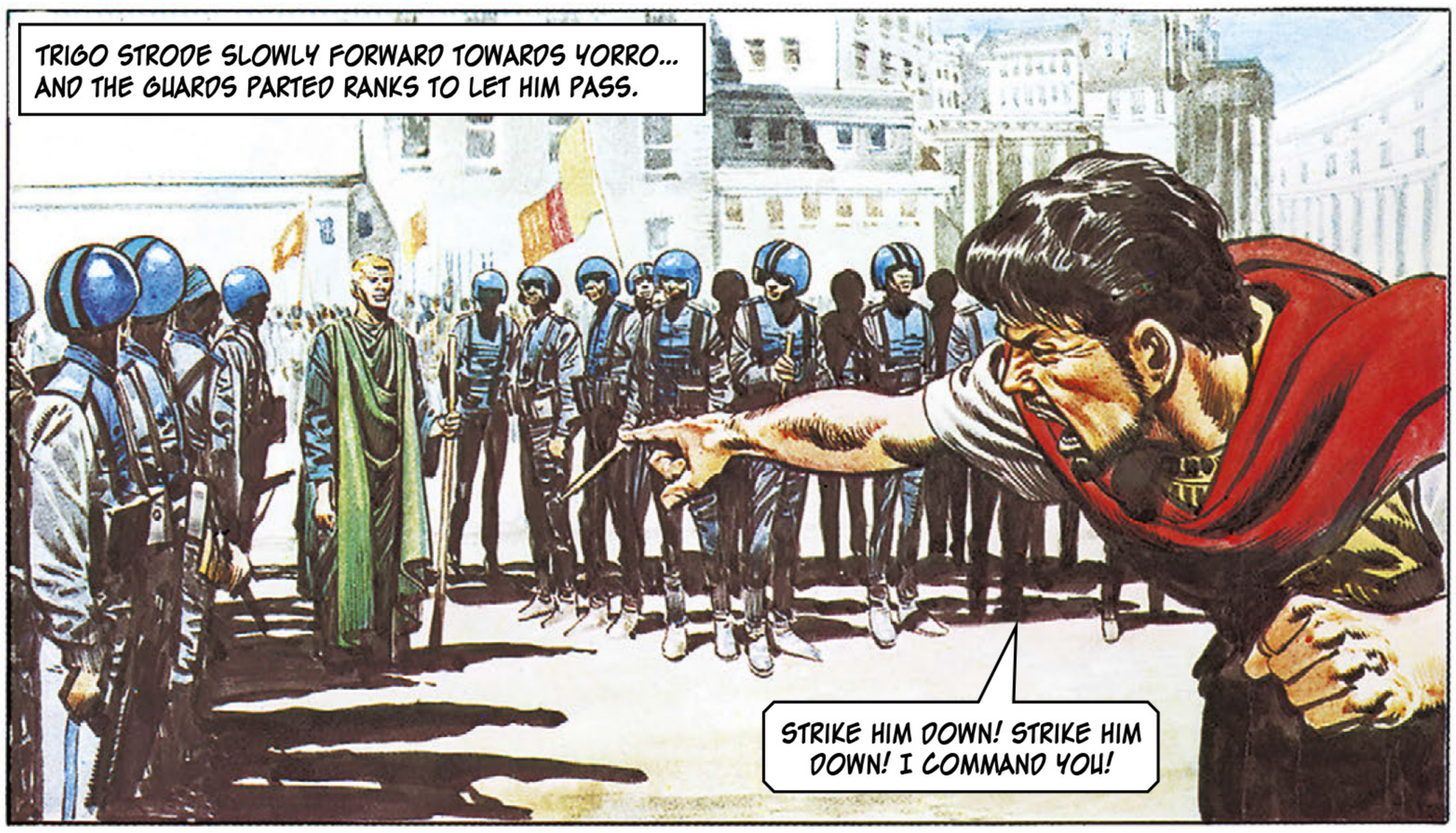

WHEN IT WAS FINISHED, YORRO FLEW ROUND IT.
IT WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS ONE OF THE WONDERS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON!

THE SIGHT OF THIS WILL DRIVE THE MEMORY OF TRIGO FROM THEIR MINDS FOREVER!

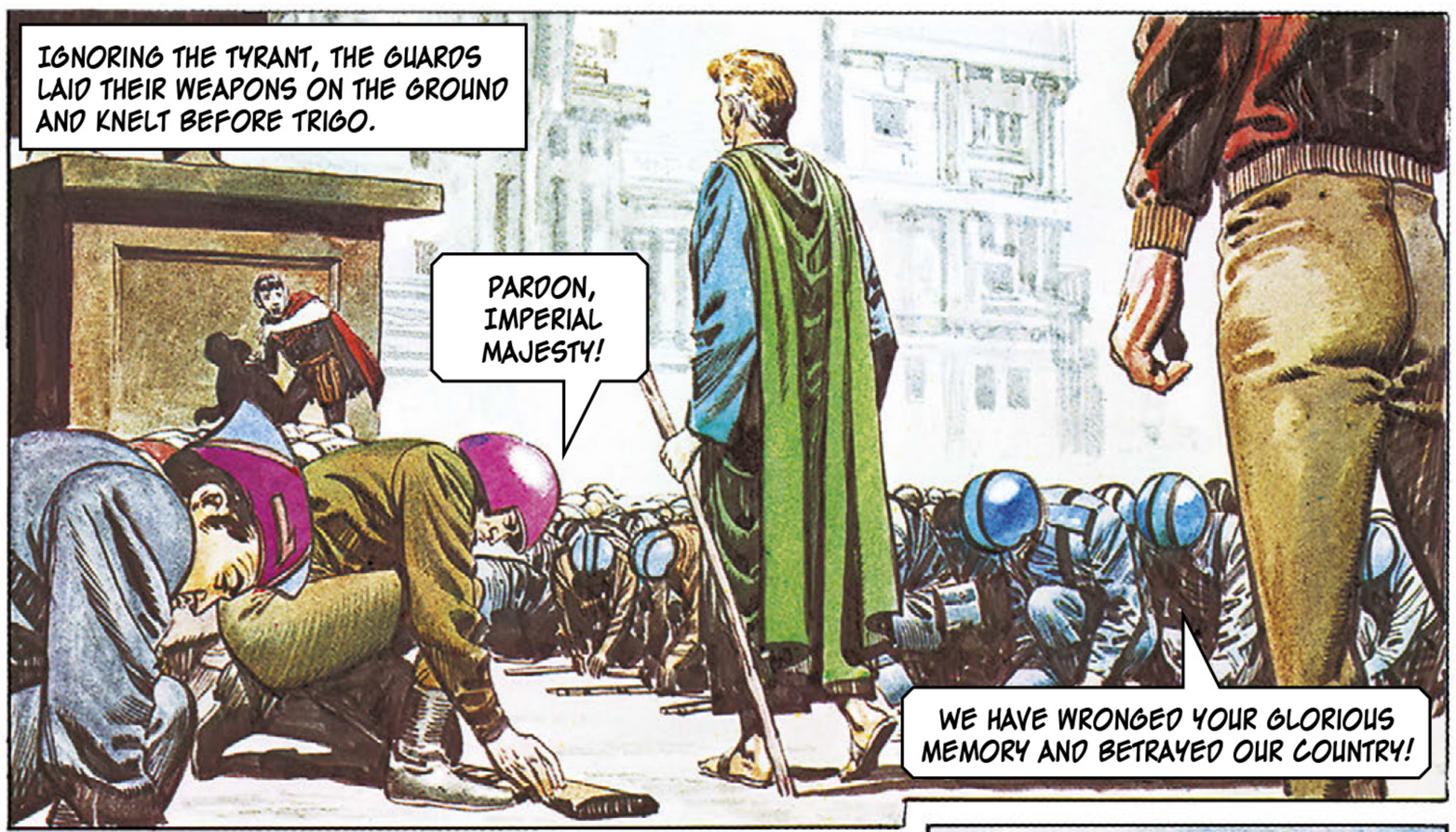
AT THE DEDICATION OF THE HUGE FIGURE, THE TRIGAN ARMED FORCES MARCHED PAST THE TYRANT, WHILE THE AIR FLEET DIPPED IN SALUTE OVERHEAD.

AT THE HEIGHT OF THE CEREMONY, TWO FIGURES STRODE IN THROUGH THE OPEN CITY GATES.
WHO ARE THOSE MEN?

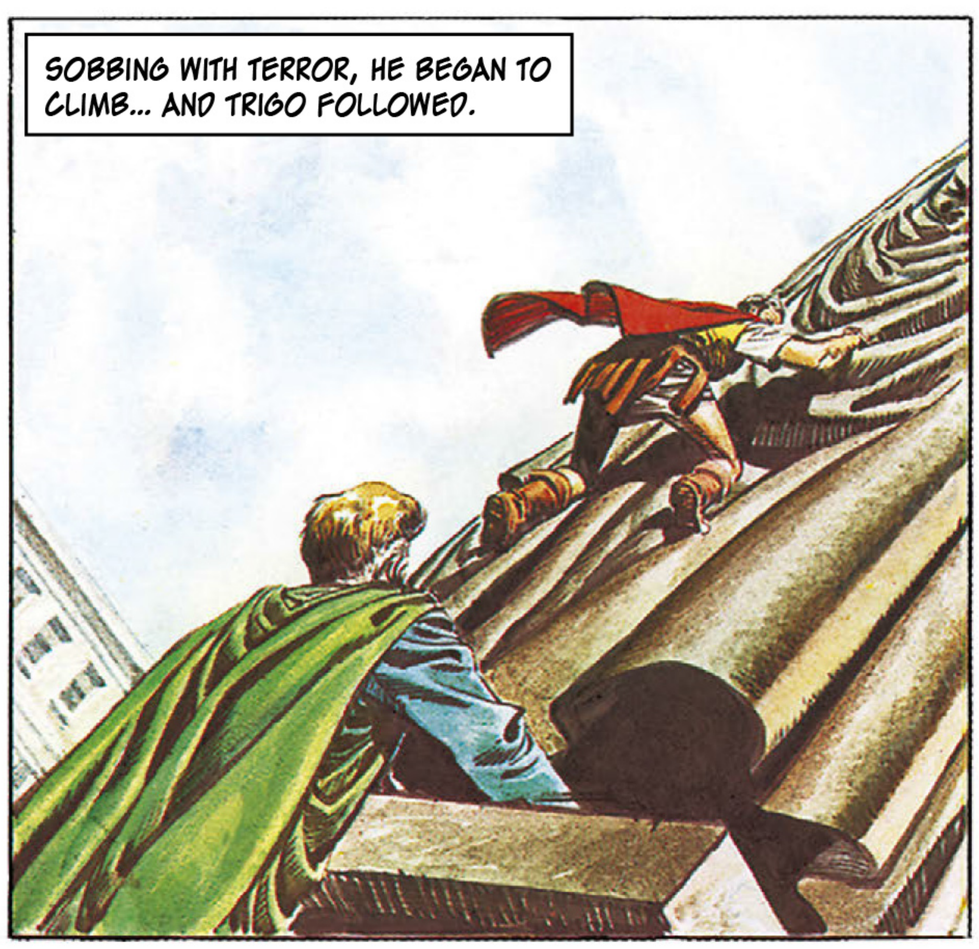
A DEEP VOICE ECHOED ACROSS THE GREAT SQUARE.
I AM TRIGO! AND I HAVE COME BACK TO CLAIM MY EMPIRE!

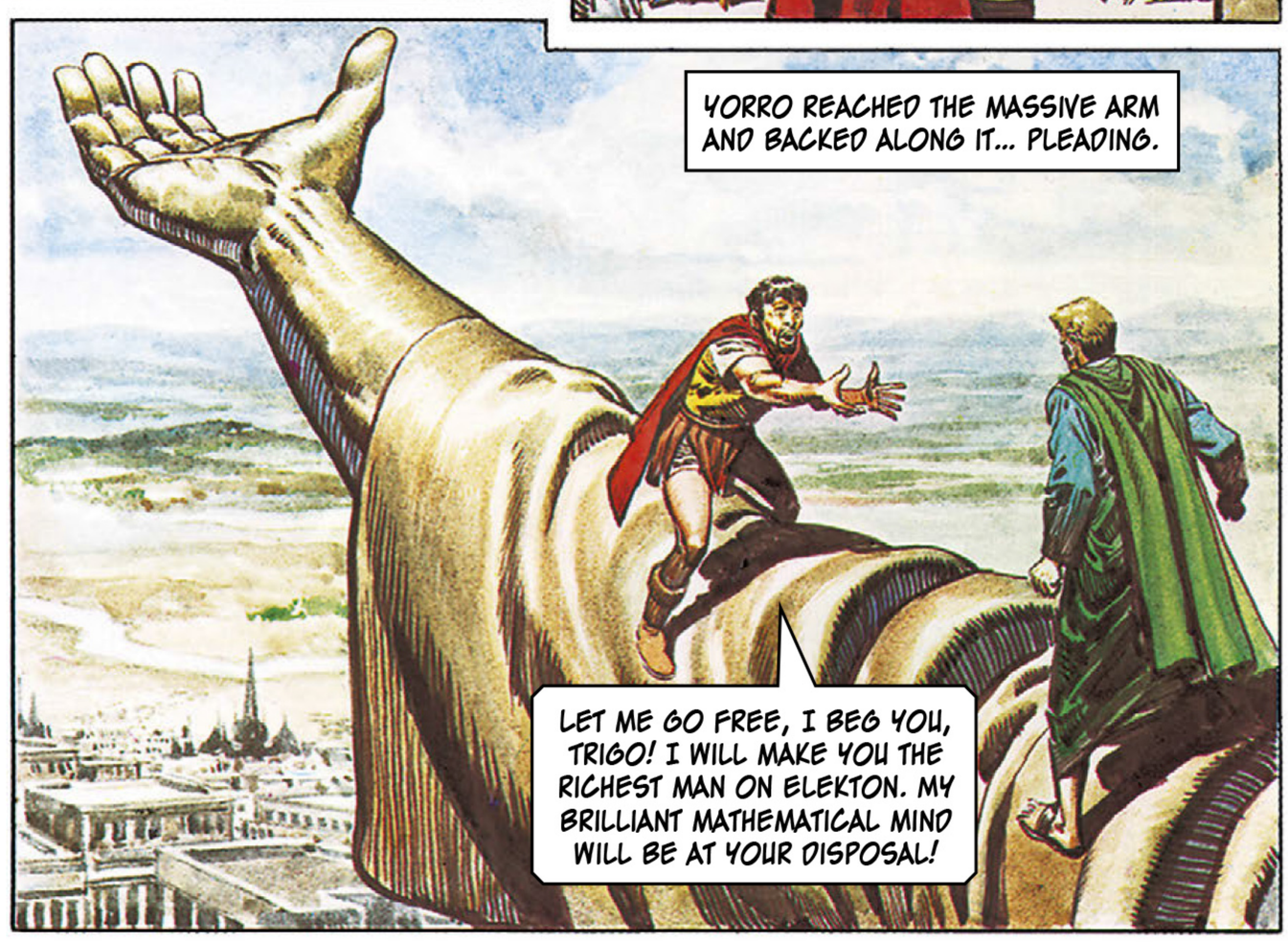

TRIGO STRODE SLOWLY FORWARD TOWARDS YORRO... AND THE GUARDS PARTED RANKS TO LET HIM PASS.
STRIKE HIM DOWN! STRIKE HIM DOWN! I COMMAND YOU!

YORRO'S VOICE ROSE IN A FEAR-STRICKEN WAIL.
WHY DO YOU NOT OBEY ME? AM I NOT YOUR BELOVED RULER? DID I NOT INCREASE YOUR PAY BY TENFOLD OUT OF MY OWN POCKET?


IGNORING THE TYRANT, THE GUARDS LAID THEIR WEAPONS ON THE GROUND AND KNELT BEFORE TRIGO.
PARDON, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
WE HAVE WRONGED YOUR GLORIOUS MEMORY AND BETRAYED OUR COUNTRY!

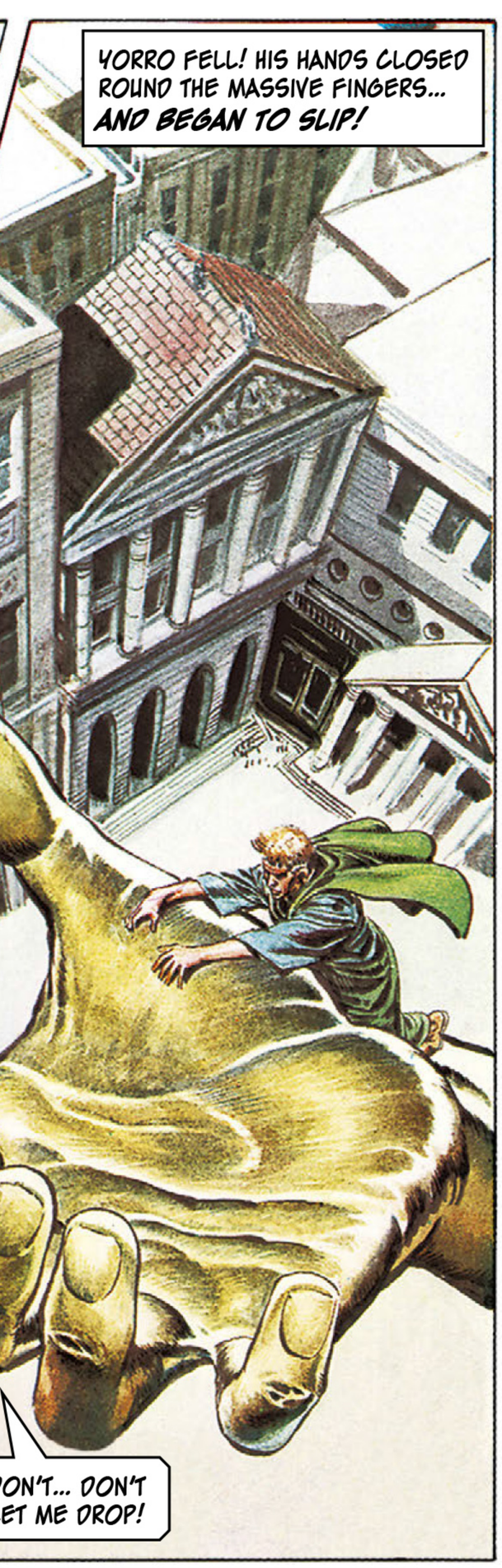
EYES FIXED FIRMLY ON THE SHRINKING YORRO, TRIGO CONTINUED TO ADVANCE. YORRO BACKED AWAY UNTIL HE REACHED THE PLINTH OF HIS OWN MONSTROUS STATUE.
NO! DON'T SLAY ME! NO!

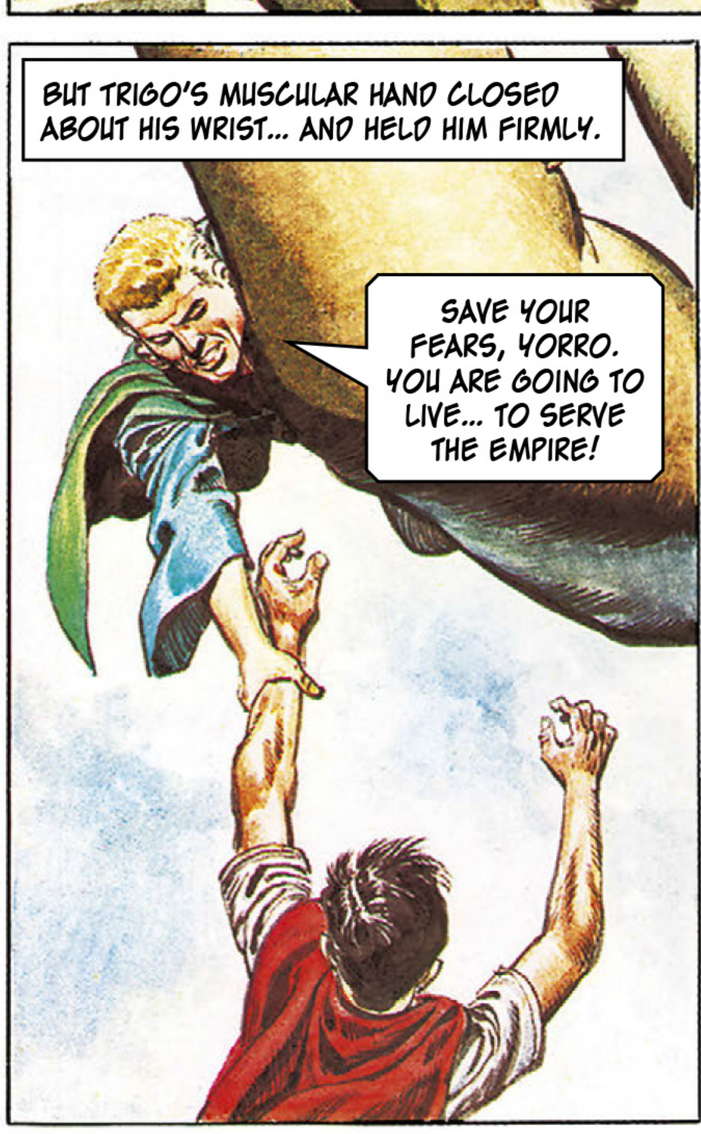

SOBBING WITH TERROR, HE BEGAN TO CLIMB... AND TRIGO FOLLOWED.

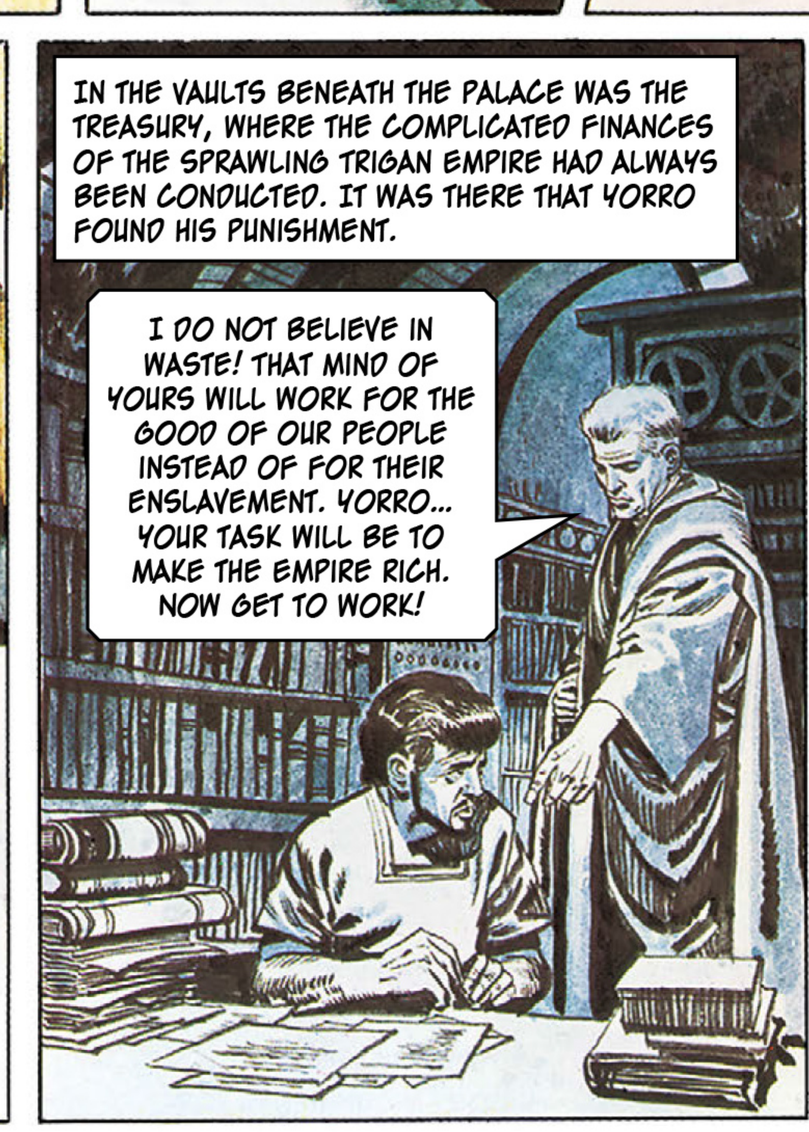

YORRO REACHED THE MASSIVE ARM AND BACKED ALONG IT... PLEADING.
LET ME GO FREE, I BEG YOU, TRIGO! I WILL MAKE YOU THE RICHEST MAN ON ELEKTON. MY BRILLIANT MATHEMATICAL MIND WILL BE AT YOUR DISPOSAL!

THEN, WHEN THE PLEADING FAILED... TREACHERY!
PERISH, CURSE YOU!

THE PROJECTILE MISSED TRIGO BUT THE REPORT ALARMED A FLOCK OF BIRDS NESTING ON THE MASSIVE HEAD OF THE STATUE. THEY TOOK FLIGHT, SCREAMING IN ALARM... AND...
AAAAAAHHHH!


YORRO FELL! HIS HANDS CLOSED ROUND THE MASSIVE FINGERS... AND BEGAN TO SLIP!
DON'T... DON'T LET ME DROP!


BUT TRIGO'S MUSCULAR HAND CLOSED ABOUT HIS WRIST... AND HELD HIM FIRMLY.
SAVE YOUR FEARS, YORRO. YOU ARE GOING TO LIVE... TO SERVE THE EMPIRE!


IN THE VAULTS BENEATH THE PALACE WAS THE TREASURY, WHERE THE COMPLICATED FINANCES OF THE SPRAWLING TRIGAN EMPIRE HAD ALWAYS BEEN CONDUCTED. IT WAS THERE THAT YORRO FOUND HIS PUNISHMENT.
I DO NOT BELIEVE IN WASTE! THAT MIND OF YOURS WILL WORK FOR THE GOOD OF OUR PEOPLE INSTEAD OF FOR THEIR ENSLAVEMENT. YORRO... YOUR TASK WILL BE TO MAKE THE EMPIRE RICH. NOW GET TO WORK!

AND SO-WITH POMP AND CEREMONY-TRIGO WAS RE-CROWNED EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS. AND A NEW AGE OF SPLENDOUR AND GREATNESS DAWNED FOR THE PLANET ELEKTON.
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!

XXI

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE RED DEATH

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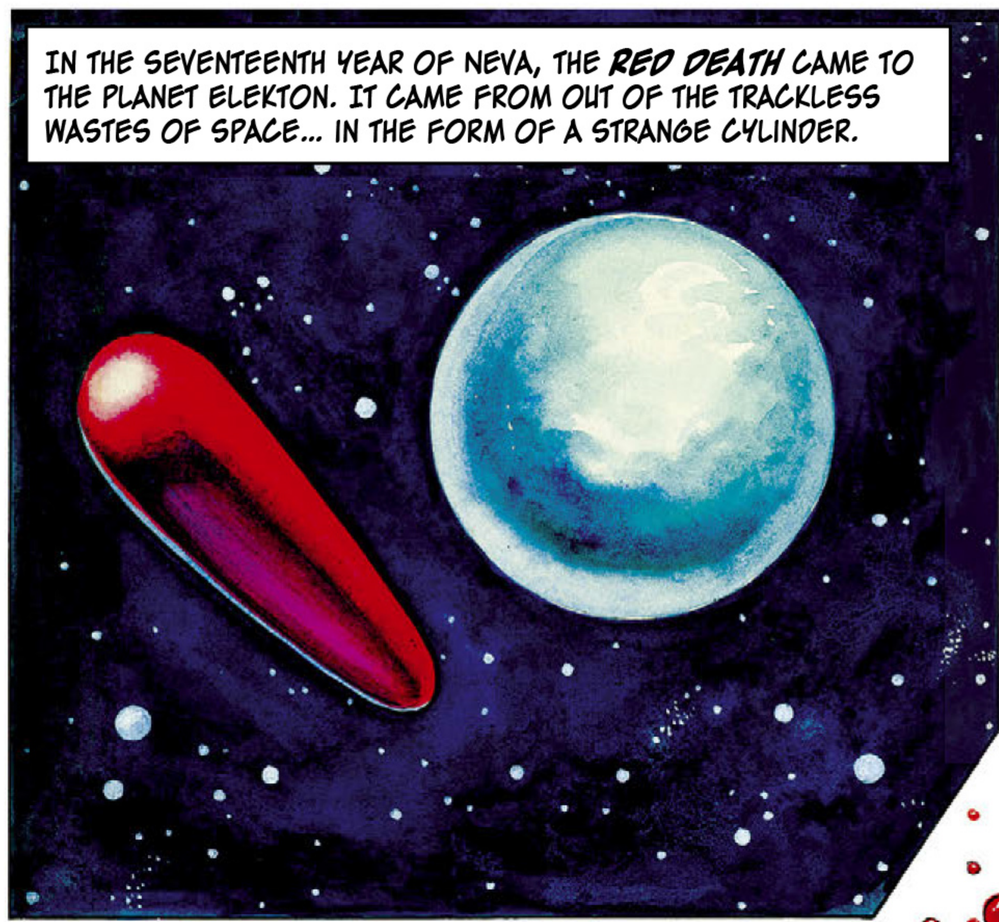
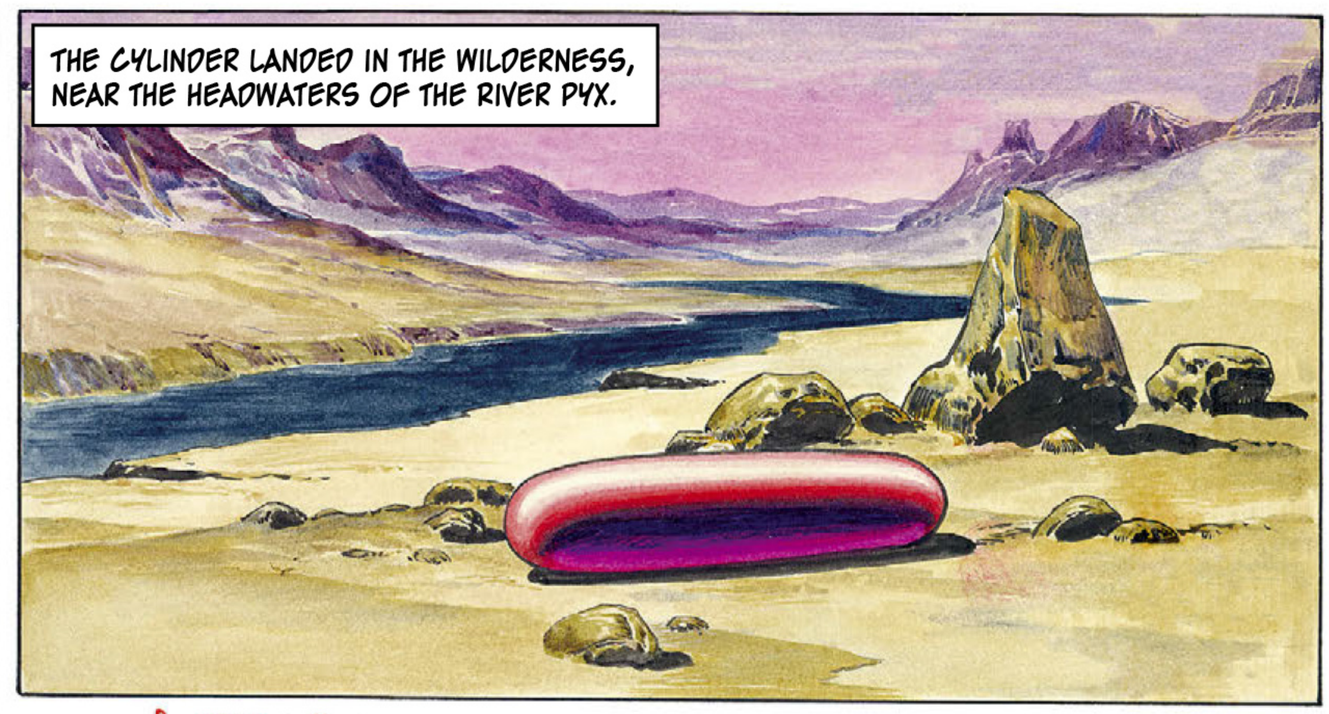
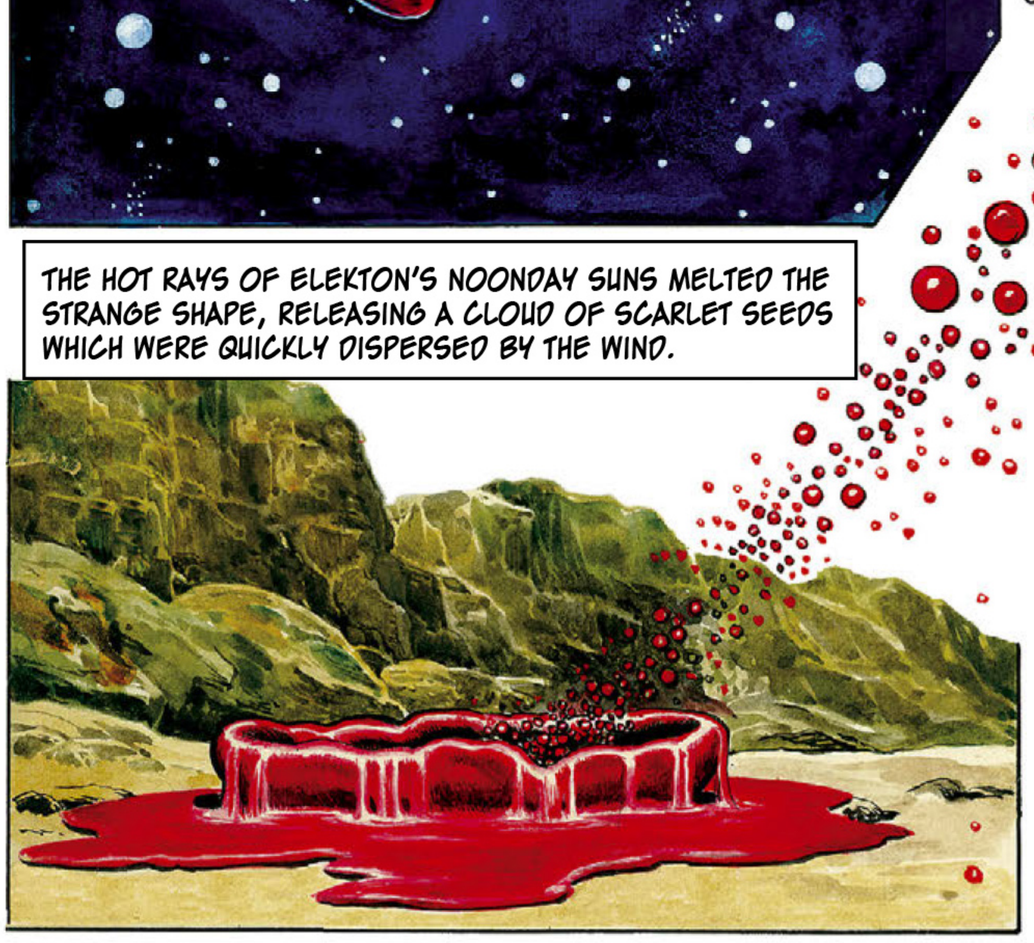
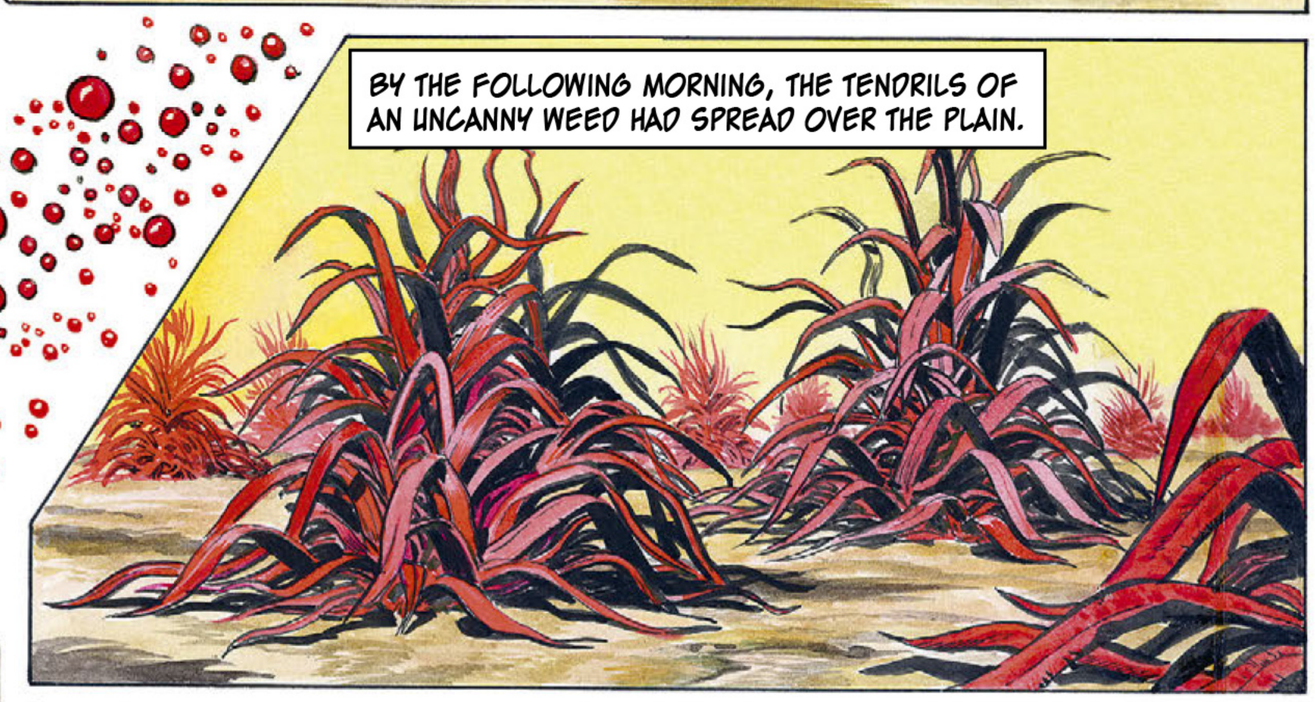
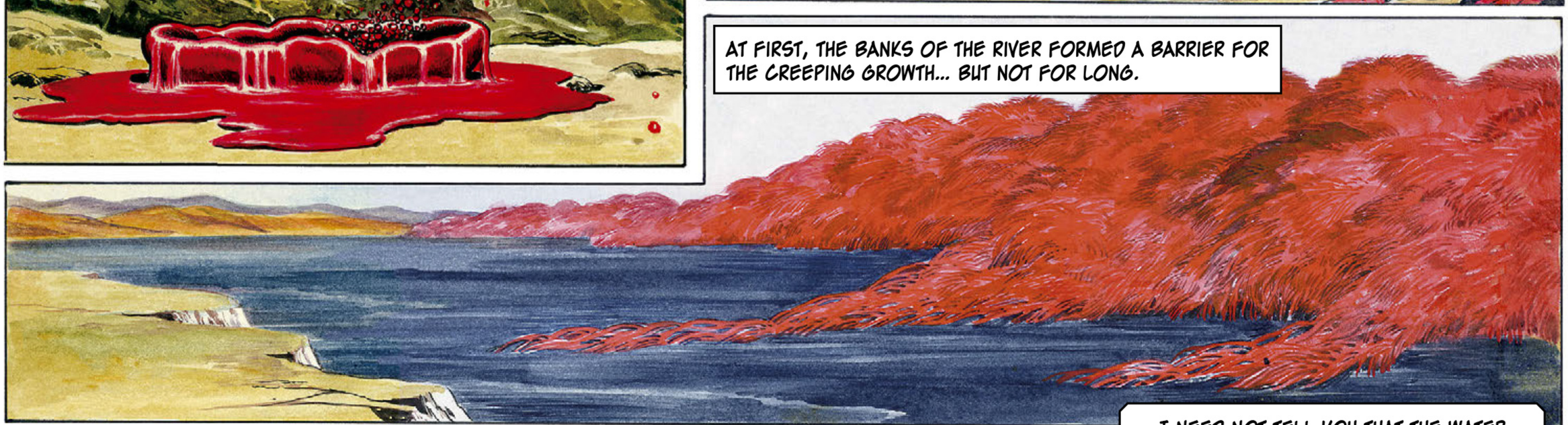
3rd January – 28th February 1970

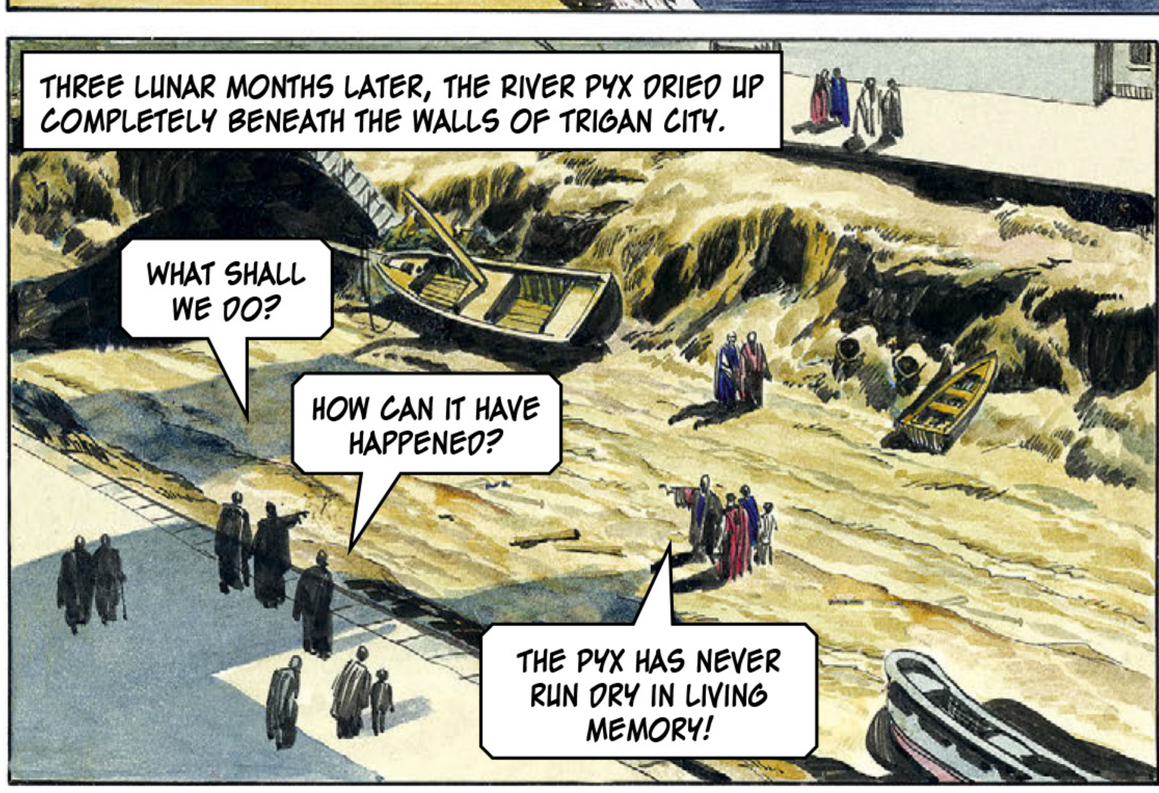

IN THE SEVENTEENTH YEAR OF NEVA, THE RED DEATH CAME TO THE PLANET ELEKTON. IT CAME FROM OUT OF THE TRACKLESS WASTES OF SPACE... IN THE FORM OF A STRANGE CYLINDER.

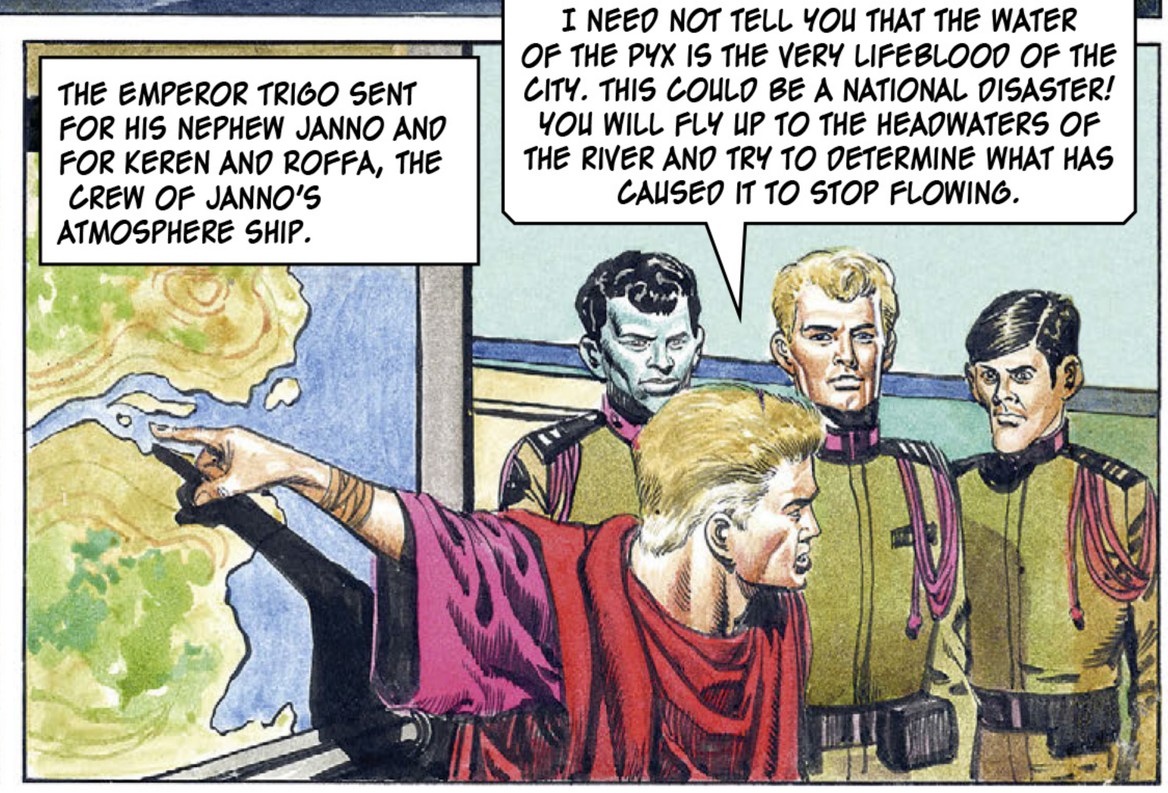

THE CYLINDER LANDED IN THE WILDERNESS, NEAR THE HEADWATERS OF THE RIVER PYX.

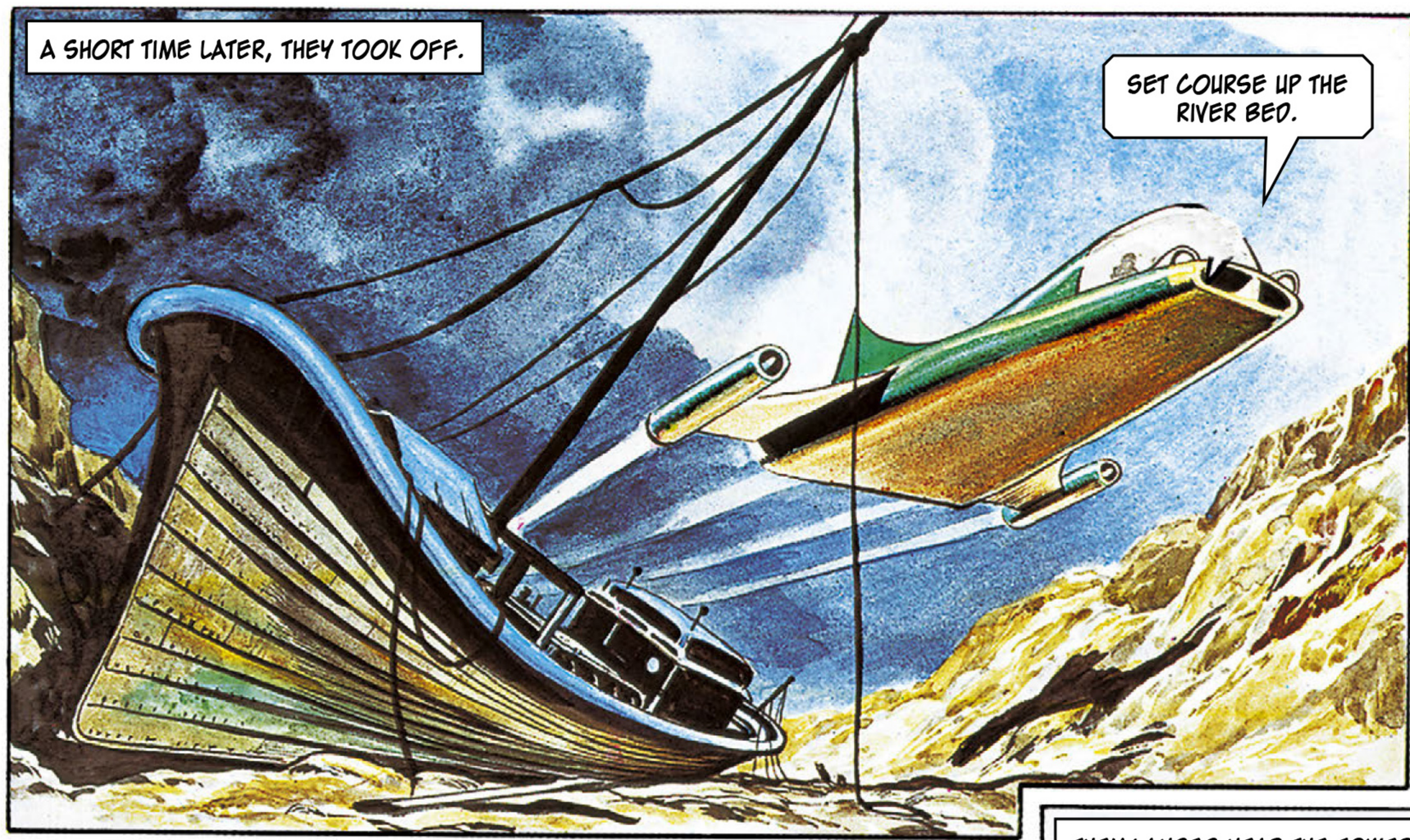

THE HOT RAYS OF ELEKTON'S NOONDAY SUNS MELTED THE STRANGE SHAPE, RELEASING A CLOUD OF SCARLET SEEDS WHICH WERE QUICKLY DISPERSED BY THE WIND.


BY THE FOLLOWING MORNING, THE TENDRILS OF AN UNCANNY WEED HAD SPREAD OVER THE PLAIN.

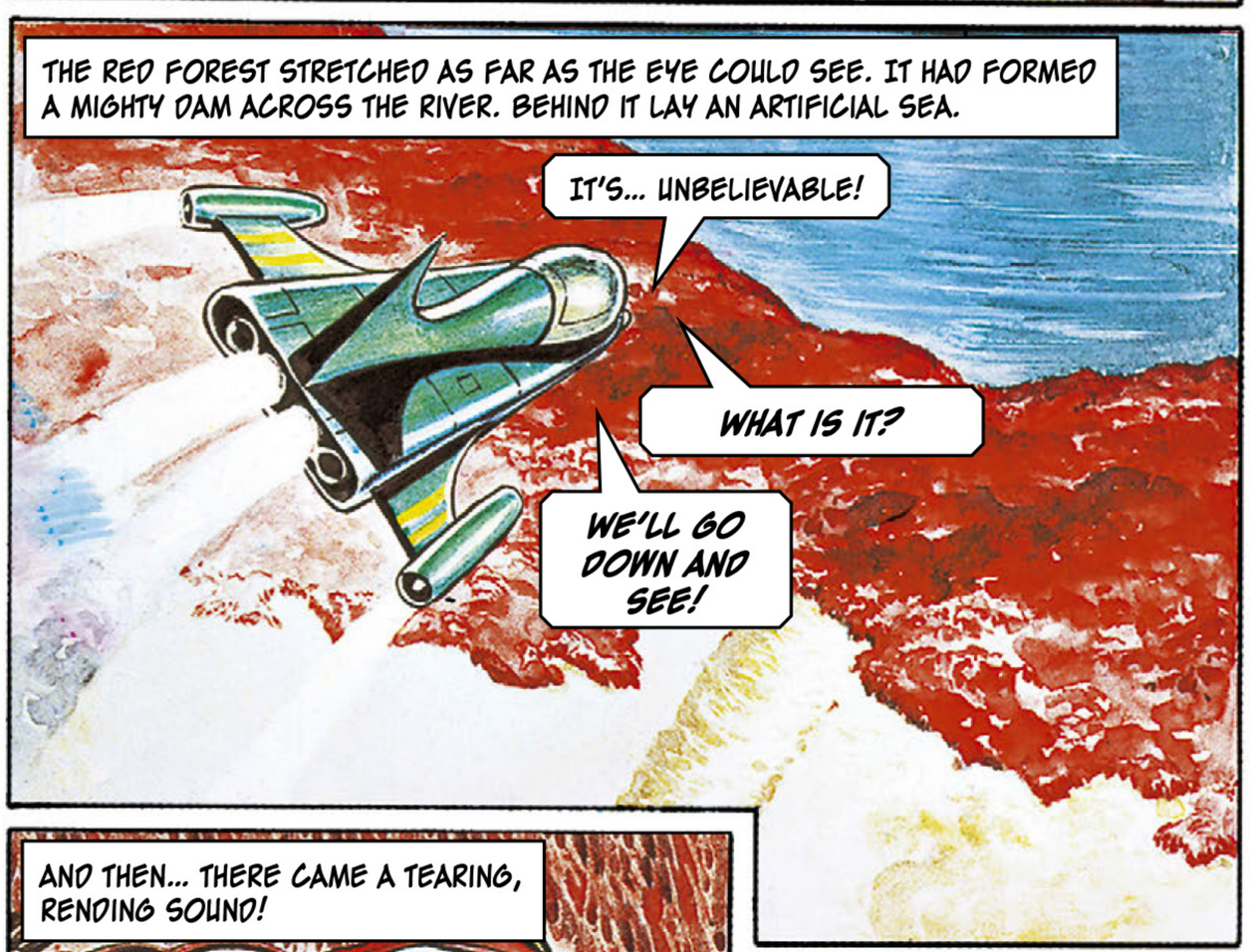

AT FIRST, THE BANKS OF THE RIVER FORMED A BARRIER FOR THE CREEPING GROWTH... BUT NOT FOR LONG.

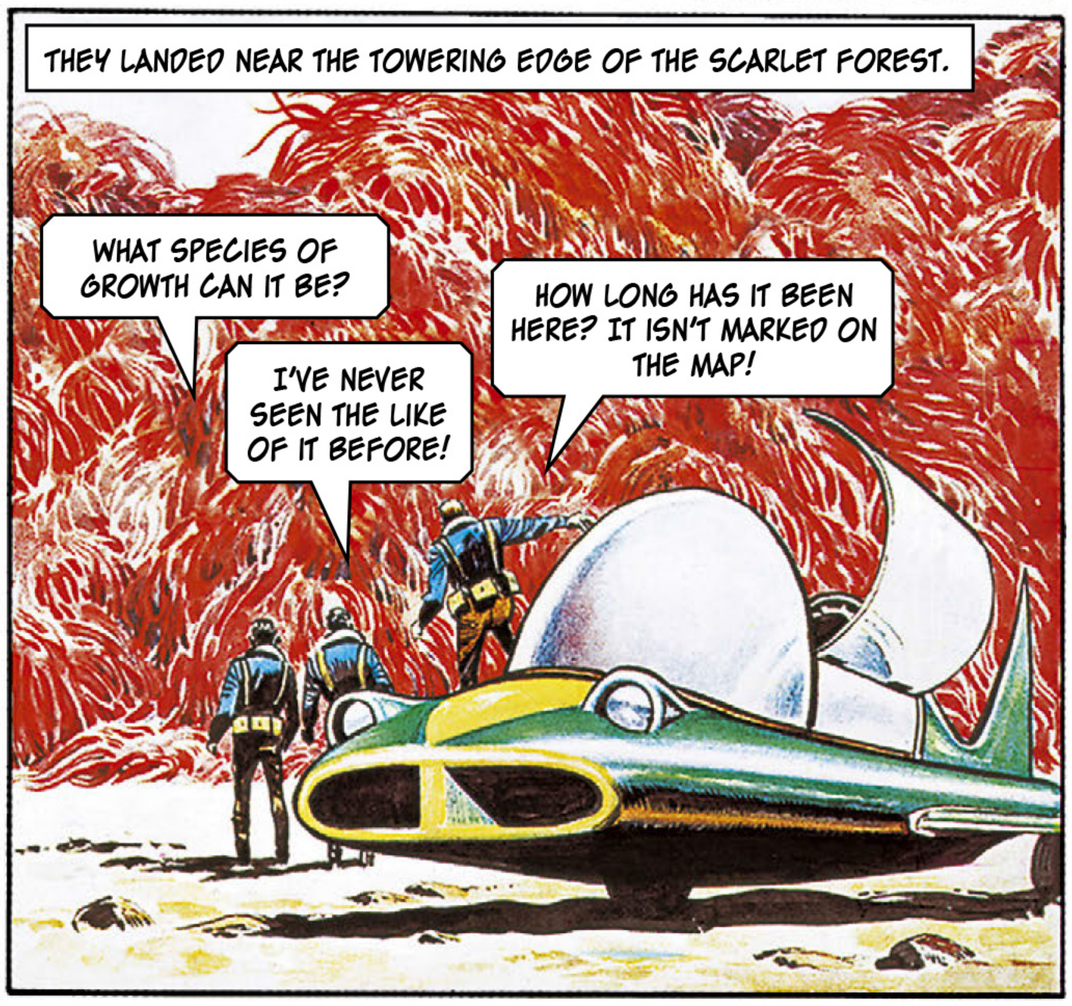

THREE LUNAR MONTHS LATER, THE RIVER PYX DRIED UP COMPLETELY BENEATH THE WALLS OF TRIGAN CITY.
WHAT SHALL WE DO?
HOW CAN IT HAVE HAPPENED?
THE PYX HAS NEVER RUN DRY IN LIVING MEMORY!


THE EMPEROR TRIGO SENT FOR HIS NEPHEW JANNO AND FOR KEREN AND ROFFA, THE CREW OF JANNO'S ATMOSPHERE SHIP.
I NEED NOT TELL YOU THAT THE WATER OF THE PYX IS THE VERY LIFEBLOOD OF THE CITY. THIS COULD BE A NATIONAL DISASTER! YOU WILL FLY UP TO THE HEADWATERS OF THE RIVER AND TRY TO DETERMINE WHAT HAS CAUSED IT TO STOP FLOWING.


A SHORT TIME LATER, THEY TOOK OFF.
SET COURSE UP THE RIVER BED.

IT WAS TOWARDS EVENING OF THE FOLLOWING DAY THAT JANNO AND HIS COMRADES LOOKED DOWN... AND...
BY ALL THE STARS!
LOOK!


THE RED FOREST STRETCHED AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE. IT HAD FORMED A MIGHTY DAM ACROSS THE RIVER. BEHIND IT LAY AN ARTIFICIAL SEA.
IT'S... UNBELIEVABLE!
WHAT IS IT?
WE'LL GO DOWN AND SEE!


THEY LANDED NEAR THE TOWERING EDGE OF THE SCARLET FOREST.
WHAT SPECIES OF GROWTH CAN IT BE?
I'VE NEVER SEEN THE LIKE OF IT BEFORE!
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN HERE? IT ISN'T MARKED ON THE MAP!

AND THEN... THERE CAME A TEARING, RENDING SOUND!
LOOK!
IT'S ATTACKING!

TOO LATE, THEY SAW THE DEADLY TENDRILS SNAKING OUT TO HEM THEM IN!
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! FOR THE GAP!

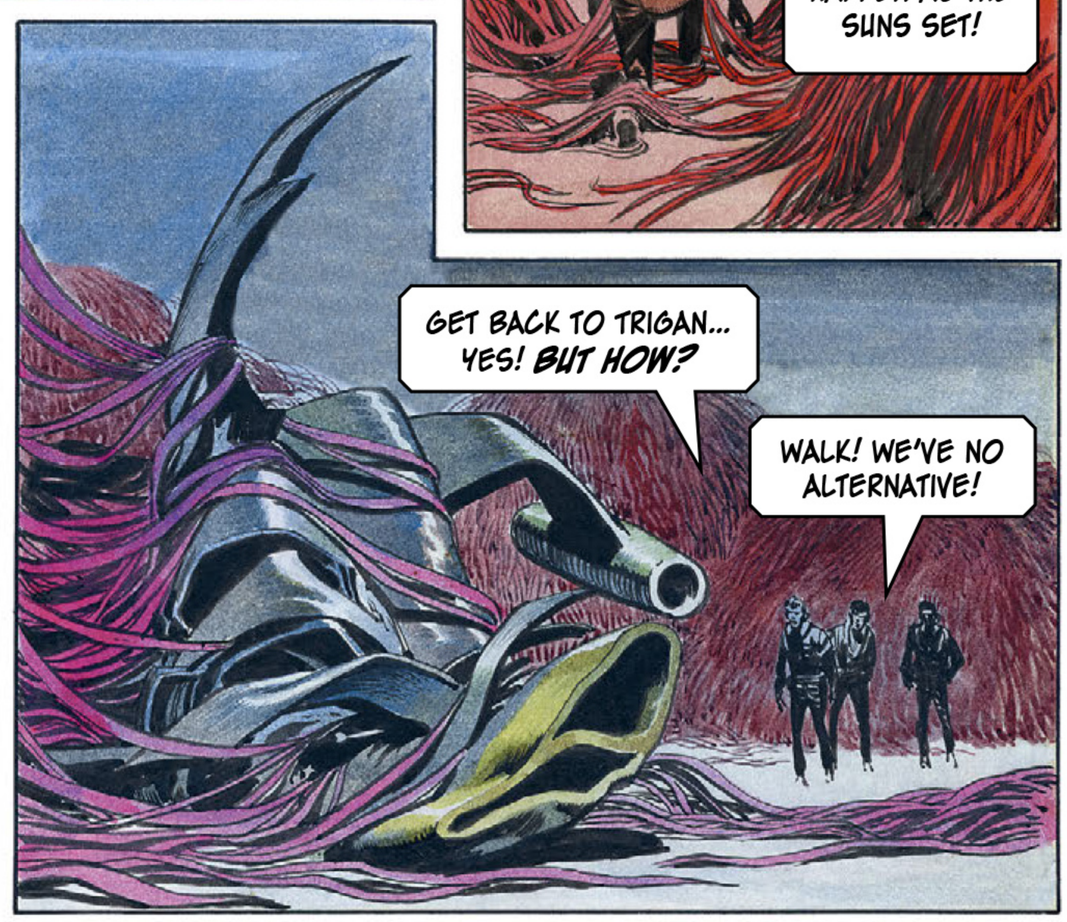
BUT, INSTANTS LATER, THEY WERE IN THE GRIP OF THE RED DEATH!

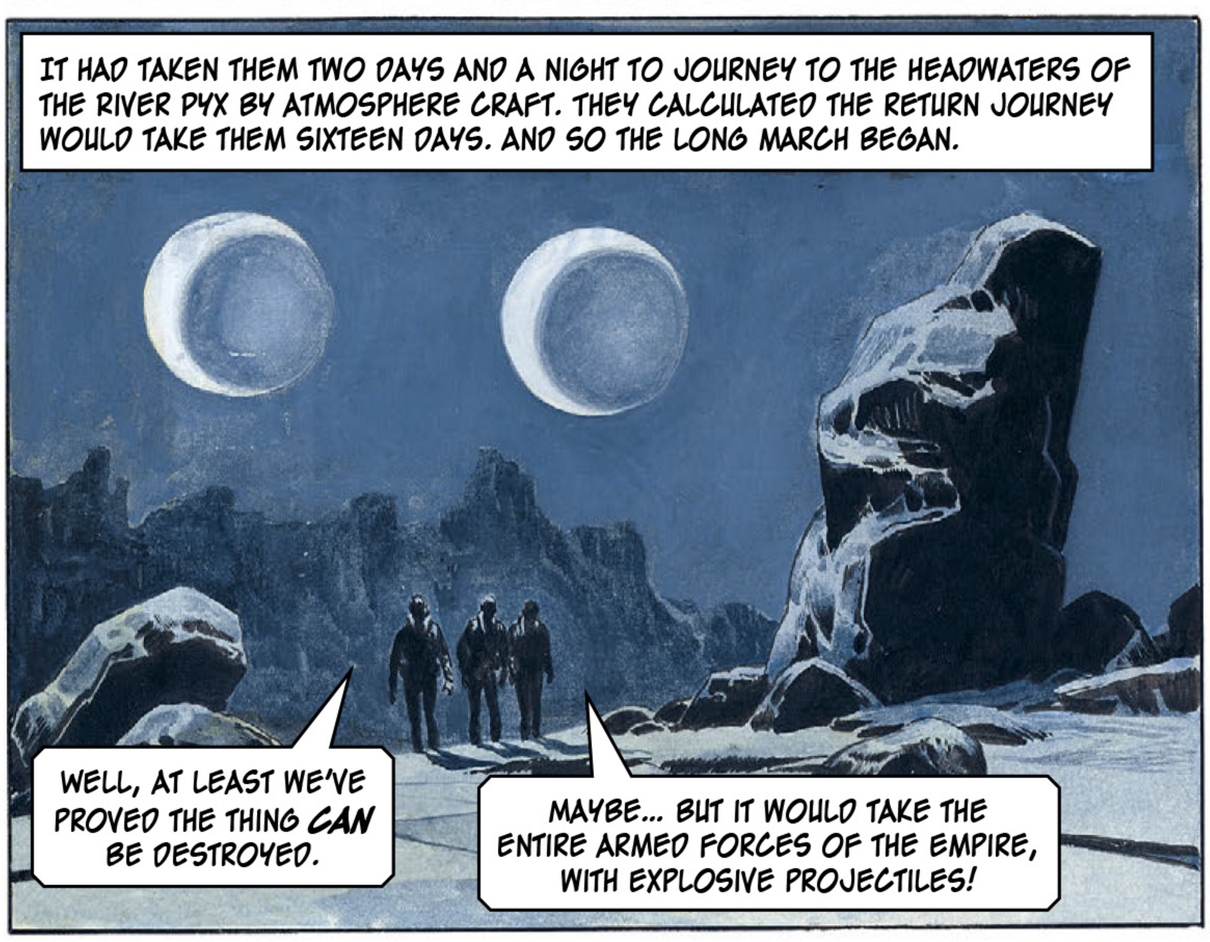
JANNO FELT HIS SENSES SLIPPING AWAY.

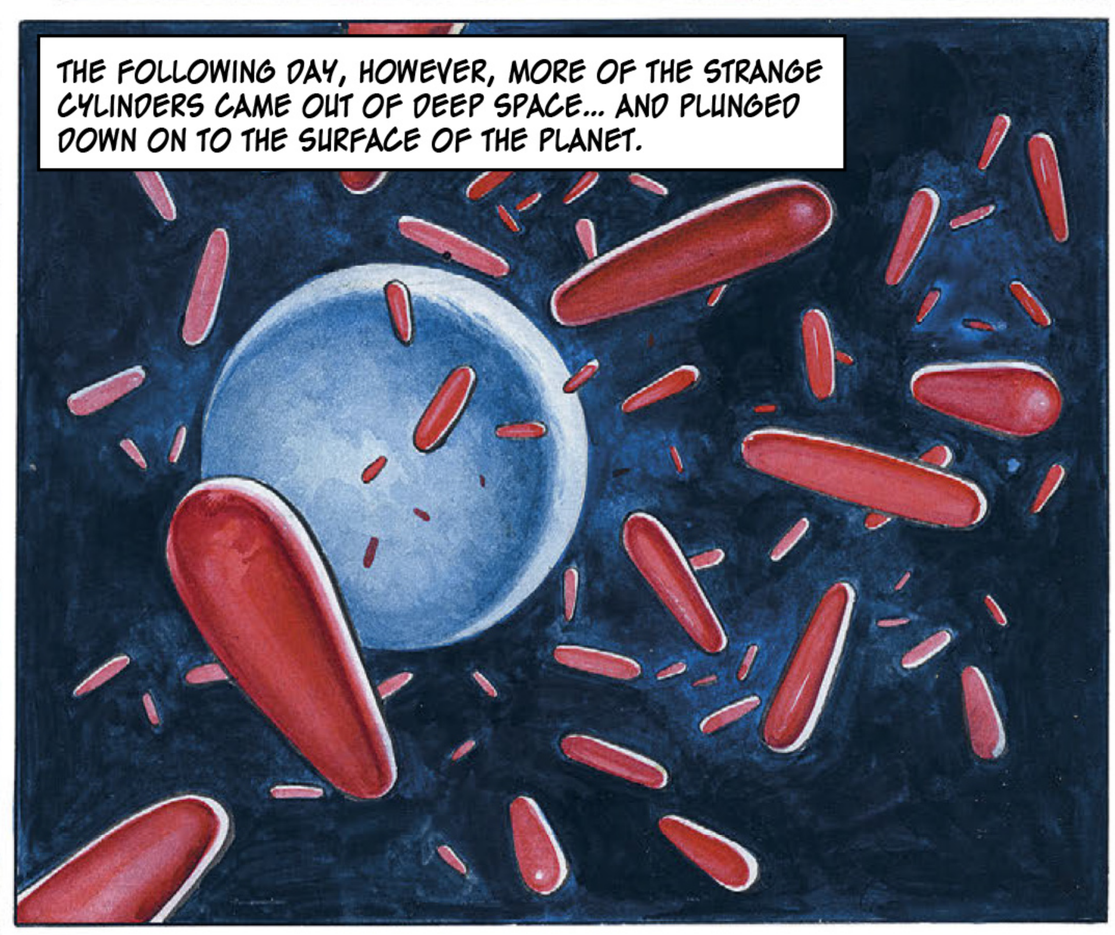
BUT SUDDENLY... THE DEADLY GRIP SLACKENED AND HE STUMBLED TO THE GROUND.

HARDLY ABLE TO BELIEVE THAT HE STILL LIVED, HE LOOKED ABOUT HIM IN THE LIGHT OF ELEKTON'S DYING SUNS AND SAW KEREN AND ROFFA.
ARE YOU BOTH ALL RIGHT?
YES! THE FIENDISH THING SUDDENLY WENT INERT!
IT SEEMED TO HAPPEN AS THE SUNS SET!

JANNO TOOK AN AXE FROM THE WRECKAGE OF THEIR CRAFT AND HACKED AWAY AT ONE OF THE STRANGE PLANTS... IN PERFECT SAFETY.
SEE? IT'S HELPLESS AFTER SUNSET!
THEN DARKNESS IS THE TIME TO DESTROY IT! WE'D BETTER GET THIS INFORMATION STRAIGHT BACK TO TRIGAN CITY!


GET BACK TO TRIGAN... YES! BUT HOW?
WALK! WE'VE NO ALTERNATIVE!


IT HAD TAKEN THEM TWO DAYS AND A NIGHT TO JOURNEY TO THE HEADWATERS OF THE RIVER PYX BY ATMOSPHERE CRAFT. THEY CALCULATED THE RETURN JOURNEY WOULD TAKE THEM SIXTEEN DAYS. AND SO THE LONG MARCH BEGAN.
WELL, AT LEAST WE'VE PROVED THE THING CAN BE DESTROYED.
MAYBE... BUT IT WOULD TAKE THE ENTIRE ARMED FORCES OF THE EMPIRE, WITH EXPLOSIVE PROJECTILES!


THE FOLLOWING DAY, HOWEVER, MORE OF THE STRANGE CYLINDERS CAME OUT OF DEEP SPACE... AND PLUNGED DOWN ON TO THE SURFACE OF THE PLANET.

SIXTEEN DAYS LATER, TRUE TO THEIR CALCULATION, THE THREE COMRADES RACED UP THE LAST HILL THAT SEPARATED THEM FROM THEIR GOAL. BELOW LAY TRIGAN CITY... ***BUT...***

BY ALL THE STARS!

NO!

THE PROUDEST CITY ON ELEKTON LAY UNDER THE GRIP OF ***THE RED DEATH!***

EVEN AS THEY WATCHED, A SECTION OF THE WALLS, WHICH HAD BEEN BUILT TO LAST TILL THE END OF TIME, CAME CRASHING DOWN!

NIGHT FELL AND THE THREE CREPT FORWARD CAUTIOUSLY—TOWARDS THE STRICKEN HEART OF THE MIGHTY TRIGAN EMPIRE.

NOW THAT THE STUFF IS INERT, WE'LL SEE IF ANYONE IS LEFT ALIVE.

THEIR FOOTSTEPS ECHOED HOLLOWLY IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY.

WHERE DO WE START SEARCHING?

THE IMPERIAL PALACE!

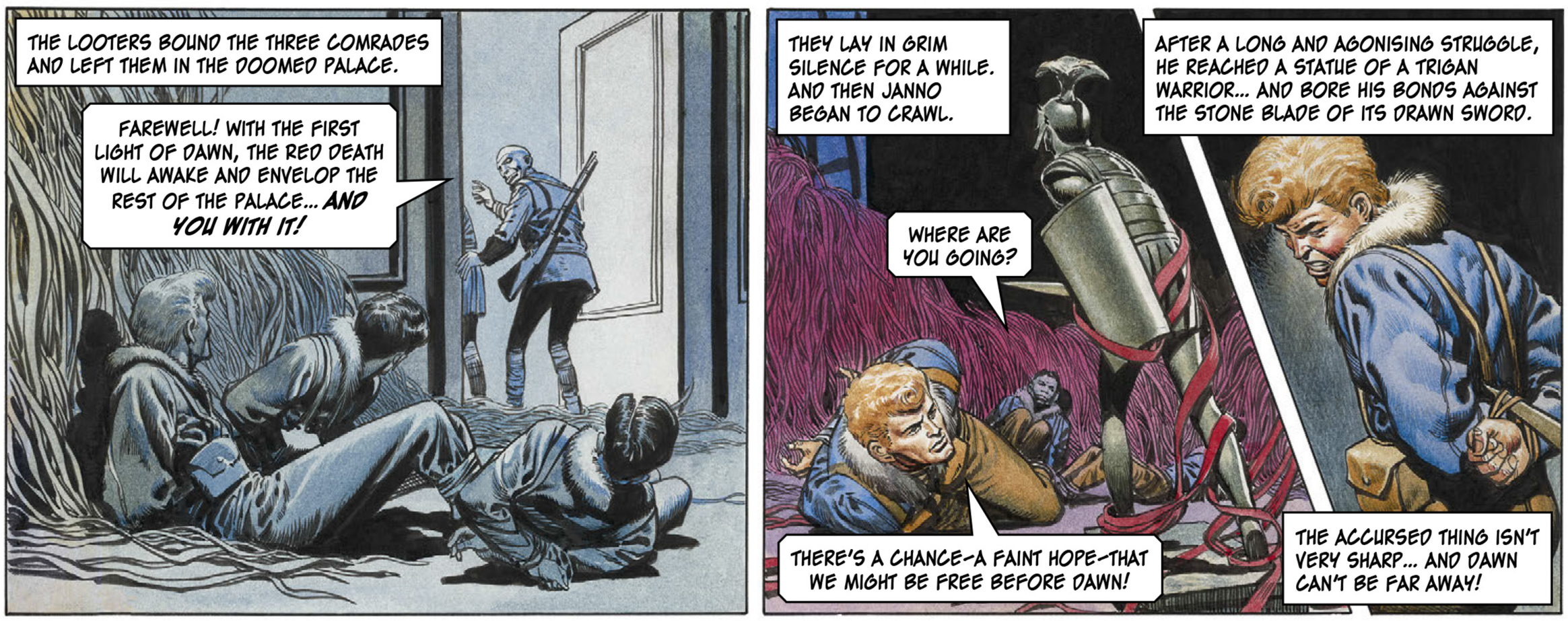
THEY WALKED THROUGH TRIGO'S VAST PALACE... CALLING... CALLING...

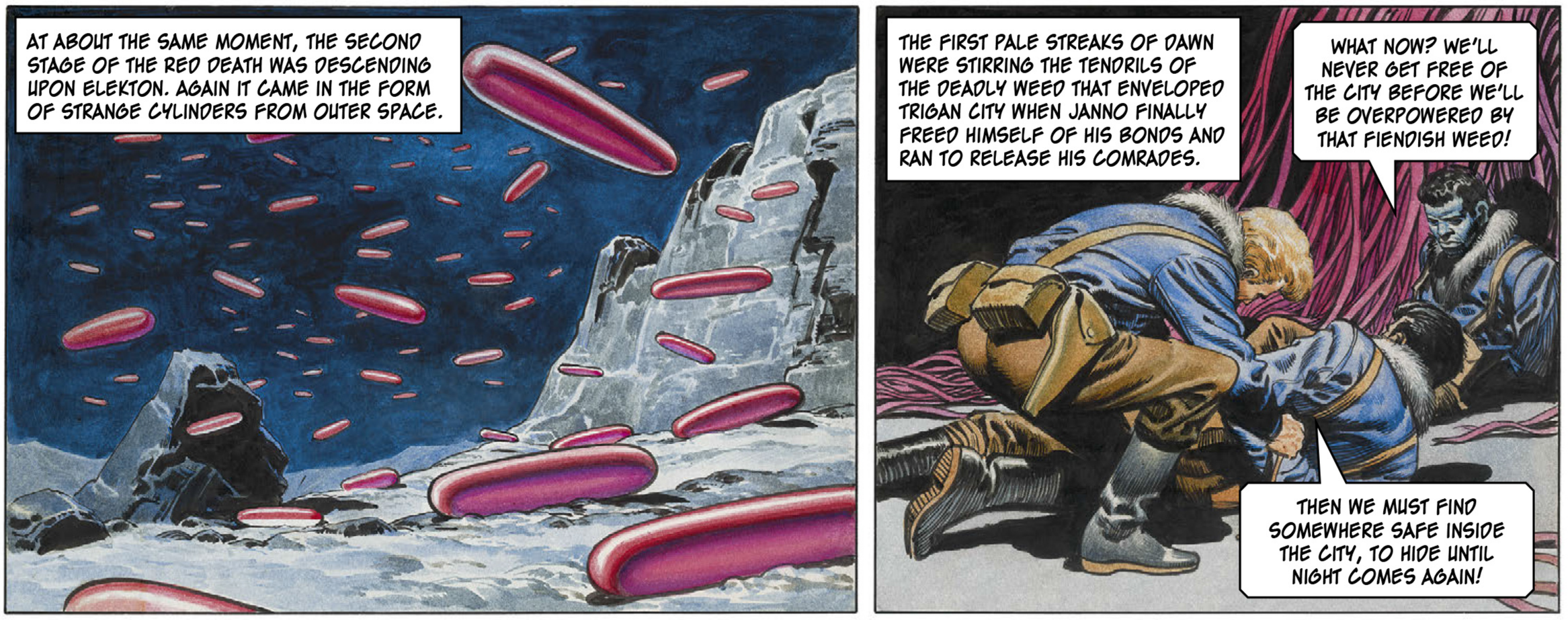
UNCLE TRIGO! IMPERIAL MAJESTY!

AND THEN... THEY HEARD A HARSH, COMMANDING VOICE!

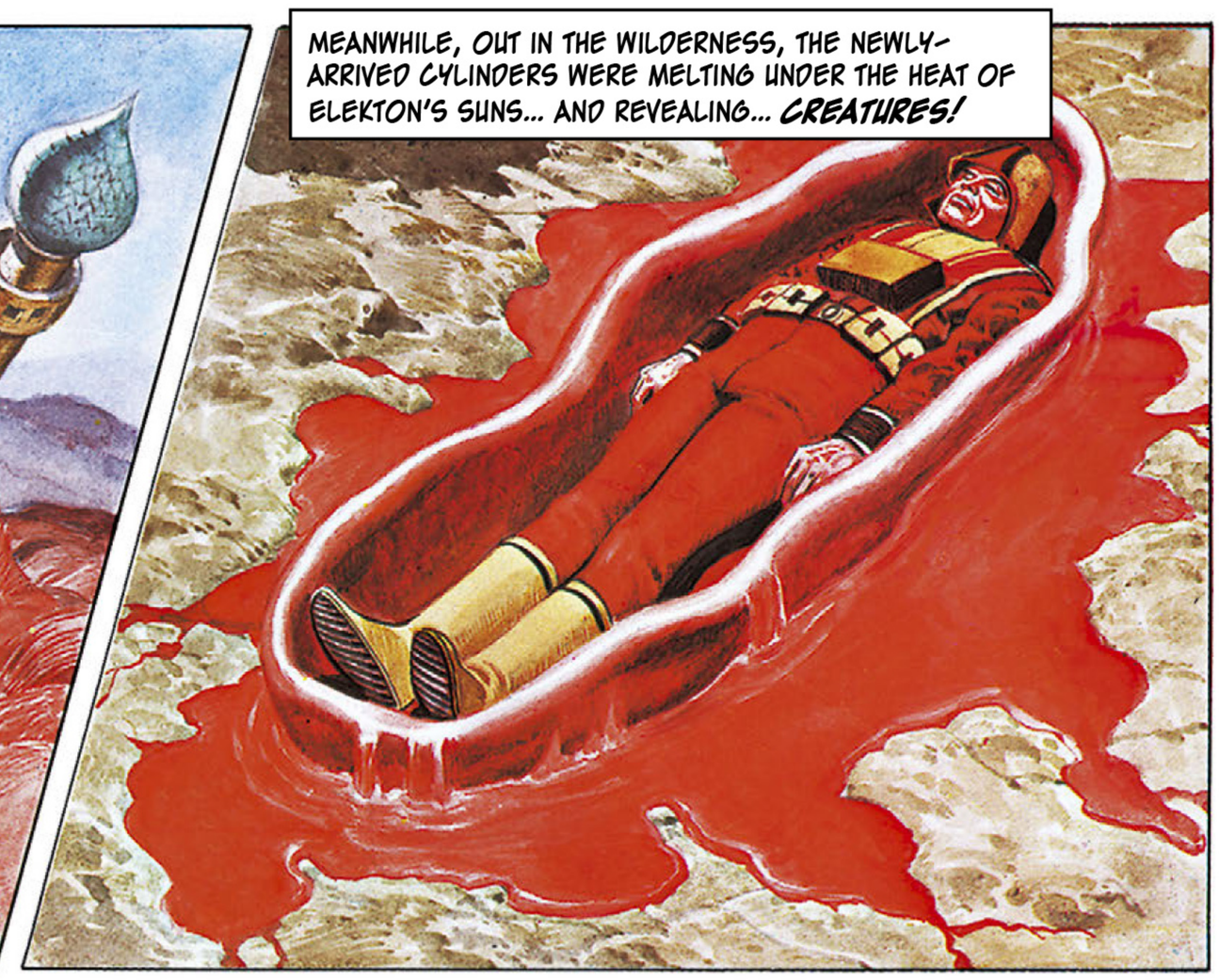
MOVE AND YOU DIE!

AS THEY CAME OUT OF THE SHADOWS, THE TRIGANS RECOGNISED THEIR ADVERSARIES AS LOKANS–MEN OF A SUBJECT RACE WHO WERE FOREVER REVOLTING AGAINST TRIGAN RULE.
LOKANS!
AYE! AND NO LONGER SLAVES! WE ARE THE MASTERS OF TRIGAN CITY NOW!
THERE WAS HATRED AND TRIUMPH IN THEIR BARBARIC FACES.
JANNO REPLIED FEARLESSLY.
YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS! SOONER OF LATER THE RED DEATH WILL BE OVERCOME AND THEN YOU'LL FACE TRIGAN JUSTICE!
THE SURVIVORS HAVE FLED TO THE WILDERNESS IN TERROR OF THE RED DEATH. THEY HAVE LEFT THE VAST RICHES OF THE CITY FOR US TO GATHER IN THE HOURS OF THE NIGHT. ALREADY OUR SECRET HIDEOUT IN THE HILLS CONTAINS ENOUGH TO MAKE US THE RICHEST MEN ON THE PLANET!
BUT YOU THREE WILL NEVER LIVE TO GIVE EVIDENCE AGAINST US! BIND THEM!


THE LOOTERS BOUND THE THREE COMRADES AND LEFT THEM IN THE DOOMED PALACE.
FAREWELL! WITH THE FIRST LIGHT OF DAWN, THE RED DEATH WILL AWAKE AND ENVELOP THE REST OF THE PALACE... AND YOU WITH IT!
THEY LAY IN GRIM SILENCE FOR A WHILE. AND THEN JANNO BEGAN TO CRAWL.
AFTER A LONG AND AGONISING STRUGGLE, HE REACHED A STATUE OF A TRIGAN WARRIOR... AND BORE HIS BONDS AGAINST THE STONE BLADE OF ITS DRAWN SWORD.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
THERE'S A CHANCE–A FAINT HOPE–THAT WE MIGHT BE FREE BEFORE DAWN!
THE ACCURSED THING ISN'T VERY SHARP... AND DAWN CAN'T BE FAR AWAY!


AT ABOUT THE SAME MOMENT, THE SECOND STAGE OF THE RED DEATH WAS DESCENDING UPON ELEKTON. AGAIN IT CAME IN THE FORM OF STRANGE CYLINDERS FROM OUTER SPACE.
THE FIRST PALE STREAKS OF DAWN WERE STIRRING THE TENDRILS OF THE DEADLY WEED THAT ENVELOPED TRIGAN CITY WHEN JANNO FINALLY FREED HIMSELF OF HIS BONDS AND RAN TO RELEASE HIS COMRADES.
WHAT NOW? WE'LL NEVER GET FREE OF THE CITY BEFORE WE'LL BE OVERPOWERED BY THAT FIENDISH WEED!
THEN WE MUST FIND SOMEWHERE SAFE INSIDE THE CITY, TO HIDE UNTIL NIGHT COMES AGAIN!

FOR SAFETY, THEY CLIMBED TO THE TOP OF THE HIGHEST TOWER OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE, FROM WHICH VANTAGE POINT THEY PEERED CAUTIOUSLY DOWN AND SAW *THE RED DEATH* CONTINUING ITS FIENDISH WORK OF DESTRUCTION.
LOOK! IF IT CAN BRING DOWN THAT TOWER, IT CAN ALSO BRING DOWN THIS!
IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG AND NERVE-BREAKING DAY!


MEANWHILE, OUT IN THE WILDERNESS, THE NEWLY-ARRIVED CYLINDERS WERE MELTING UNDER THE HEAT OF ELEKTON'S SUNS... AND REVEALING... *CREATURES!*

BEFORE THE SUNS WERE IN THE ZENITH, A COHORT OF ALIEN RED WARRIORS WAS DRAWN UP IN ORDER OF BATTLE!
YOU-KNOW-YOUR-ORDERS. OUR-TASK-IS-TO-OCCUPY-THE-PLANET-AND-ELIMINATE-ALL-LIVING-CREATURES-WHO-HAVE-SURVIVED-THE-PLANT-INVASION!

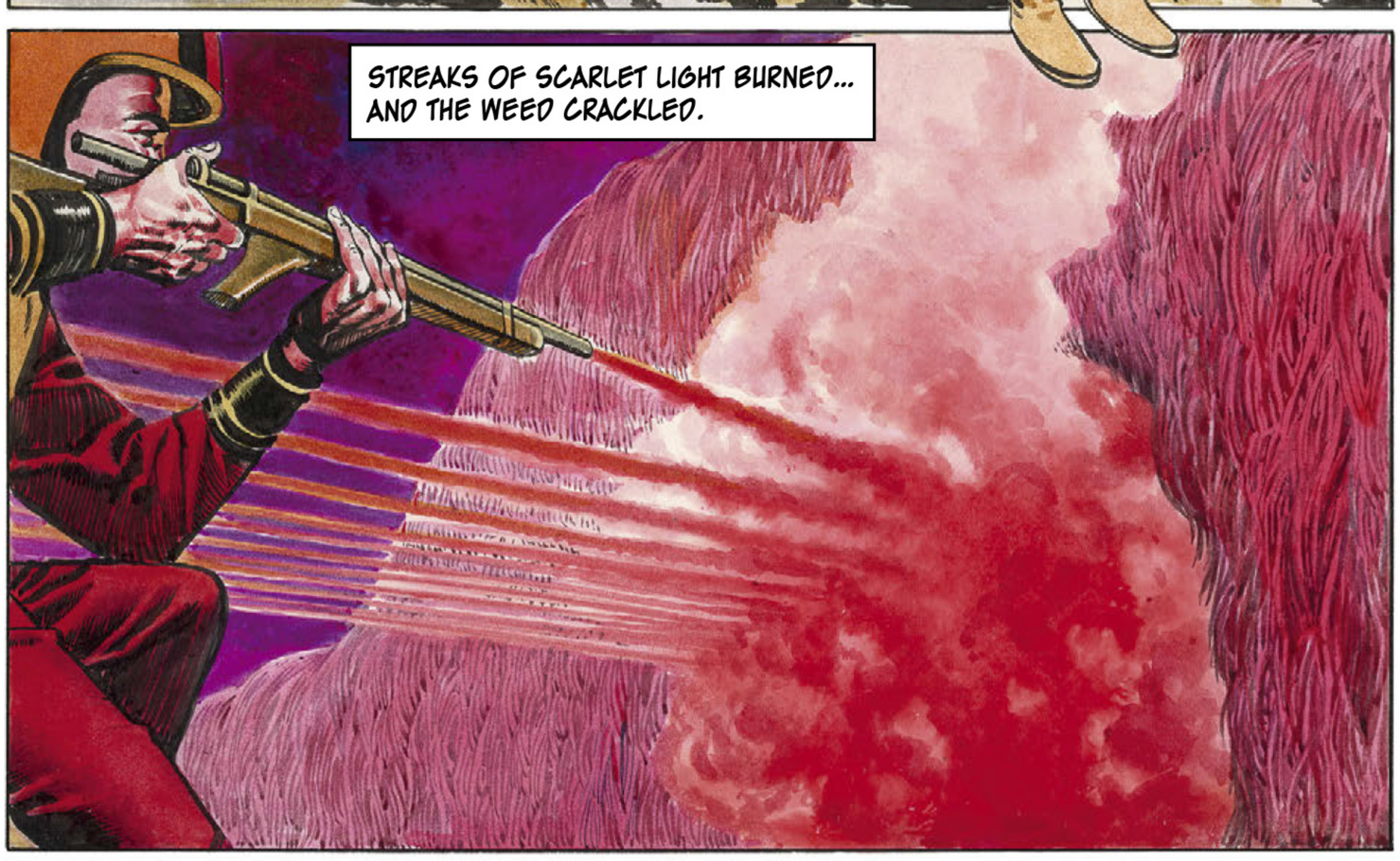
THE ALIENS MARCHED IN THE DIRECTION OF TRIGAN CITY. WHEN THEY DREW NEAR...
I-DETECT-LIVING-CREATURES-AHEAD!
PREPARE-FOR-ELIMINATION!

THE LOKAN LOOTERS WERE CARRYING THEIR NIGHT'S TAKINGS TO A SECRET HIDEOUT IN THE HILLS WHEN THEY TURNED IN ALARM TO SEE THE STRANGE WARRIORS APPROACHING.
IT'S AN ATTACK! OPEN FIRE!

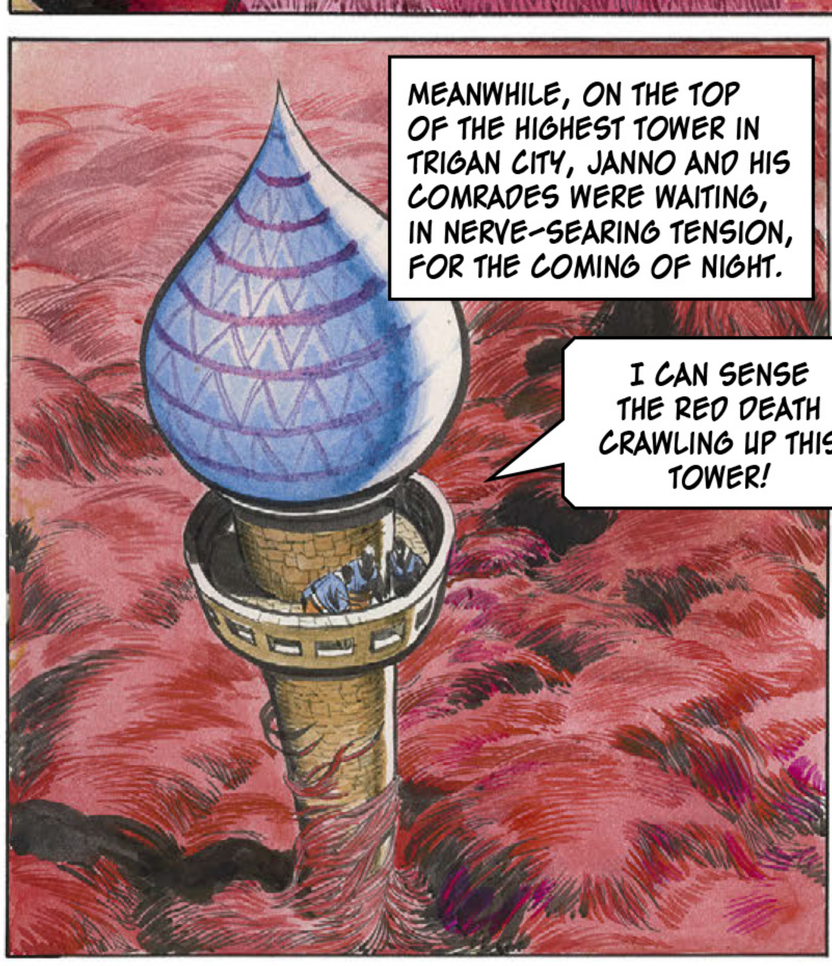
THERE WERE STREAKS OF SEARING, SCARLET LIGHT... *AND THE LOKANS VANISHED!*

HAVING WIPED THE LOKANS INTO INVISIBILITY, THE RED COHORT MARCHED ON.
THE-PRINCIPAL-CAPITAL-CITY-OF-THE-PLANET-IS-OUR-NEXT-OBJECTIVE!

APPROACHING TRIGAN CITY, THEY CAME ACROSS A SEA OF THE SINISTER RED WEED BARRING THEIR PATH.
ELIMINATE!


STREAKS OF SCARLET LIGHT BURNED... AND THE WEED CRACKLED.

MASTERS OF THE HIDEOUS FATE THEY HAD UNLEASHED UPON THE PLANET ELEKTON, THE RED WARRIORS MARCHED ON THEIR WAY THROUGH A TUNNEL CARVED IN THE RED DEATH!


MEANWHILE, ON THE TOP OF THE HIGHEST TOWER IN TRIGAN CITY, JANNO AND HIS COMRADES WERE WAITING, IN NERVE-SEARING TENSION, FOR THE COMING OF NIGHT.
I CAN SENSE THE RED DEATH CRAWLING UP THIS TOWER!

SHORTLY BEFORE THE SETTING OF THE SUNS, THEY FROZE IN ALARM TO SEE THE TIP OF A PROBING TENDRIL RISE ABOVE THEM!
LOOK!
SILENCE! OR WE ARE ALL DEAD!

HOWEVER, THE STRANGE SENSORY ORGANS OF THE WEED FAILED TO LOCATE THE THREE FUGITIVES... AND THE SUNS SET ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS.
WHAT NOW?
NOW TO FIND OUR WAY INTO THE PALACE ARMOURY AND GET OURSELVES SOME WEAPONS!

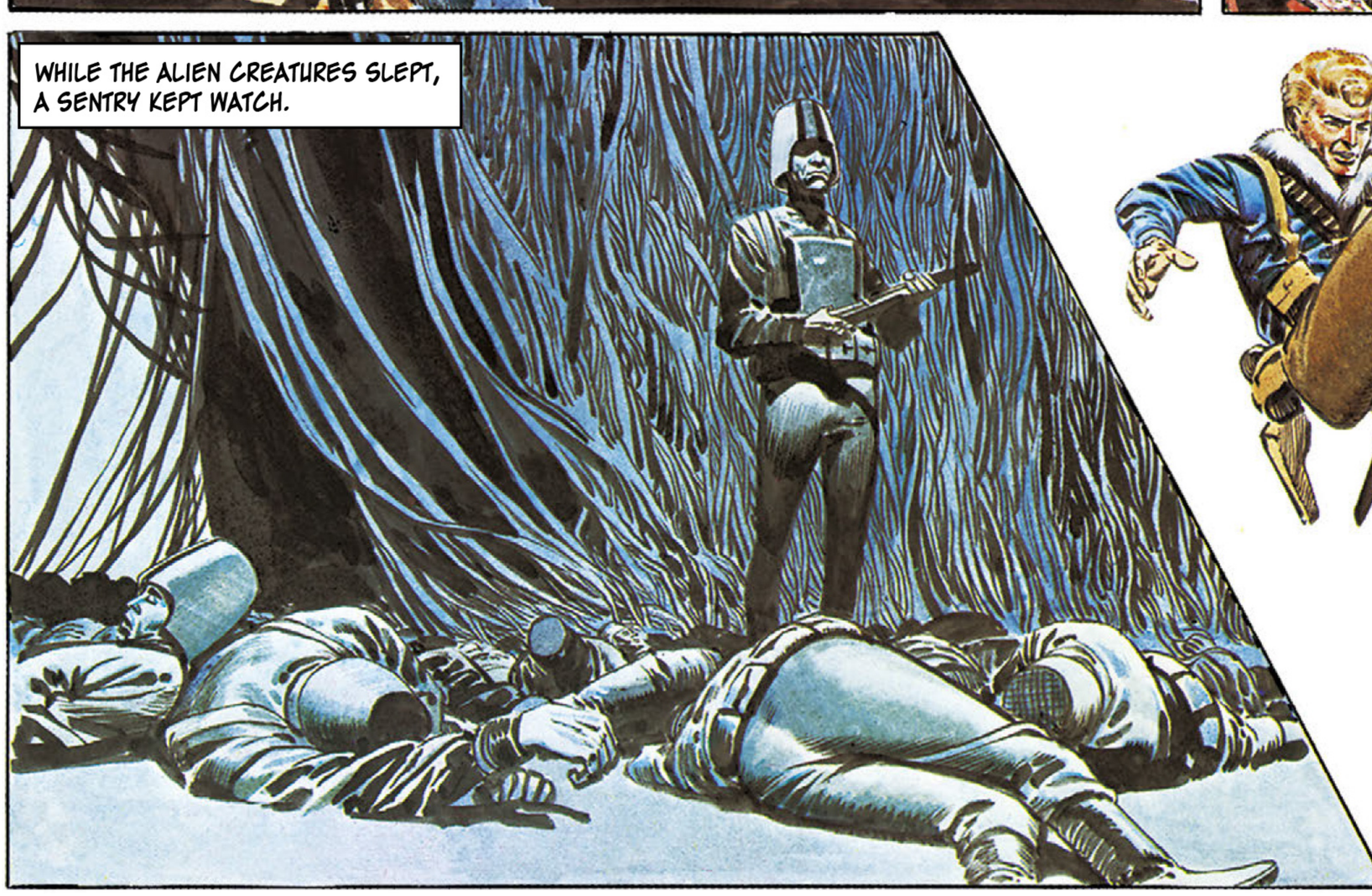
THEY TORE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE INERT RED DEATH TO REACH THE DOOR OF THE ARMOURY.

AND...
NOW WE'LL GO OUT AND SEARCH THE WILDERNESS FOR SURVIVORS FROM THE CITY!
BY THE STARS, I HOPE WE FIND THE EMPEROR AND YOUR FATHER STILL ALIVE!

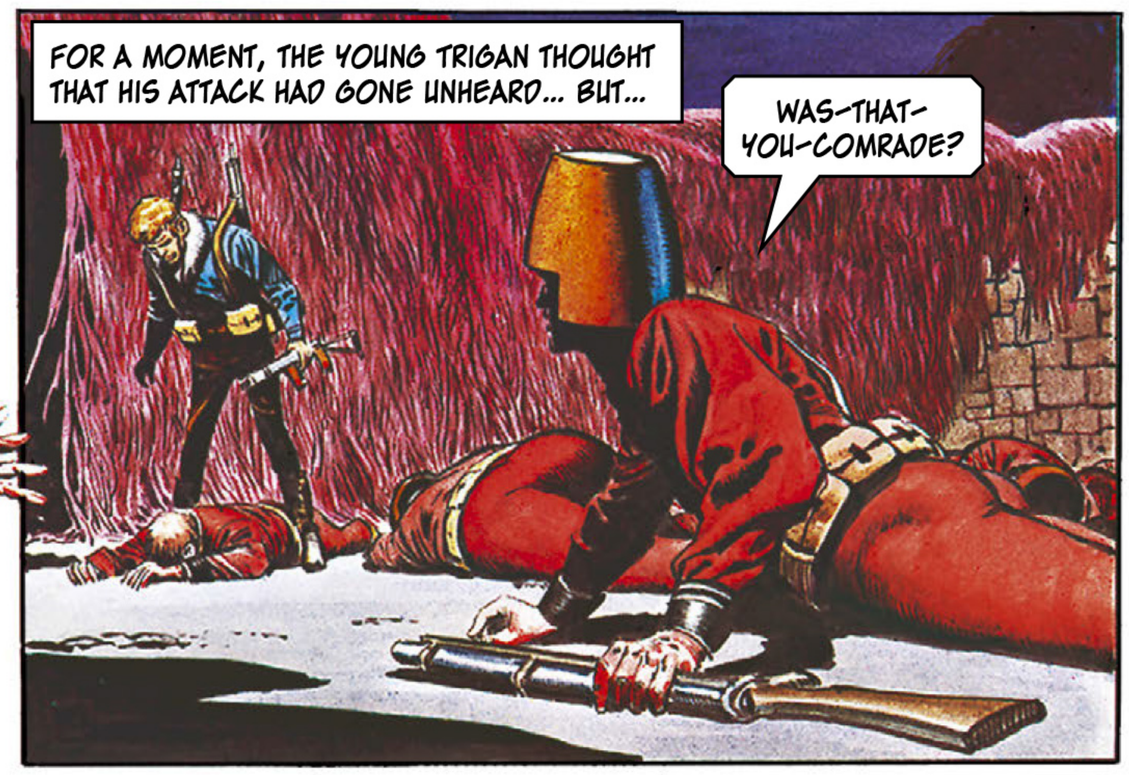
CROSSING THE WEED-TANGLED GREAT SQUARE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE MAIN GATES OF THE CITY, JANNO HEARD... MARCHING FEET!
TAKE COVER!

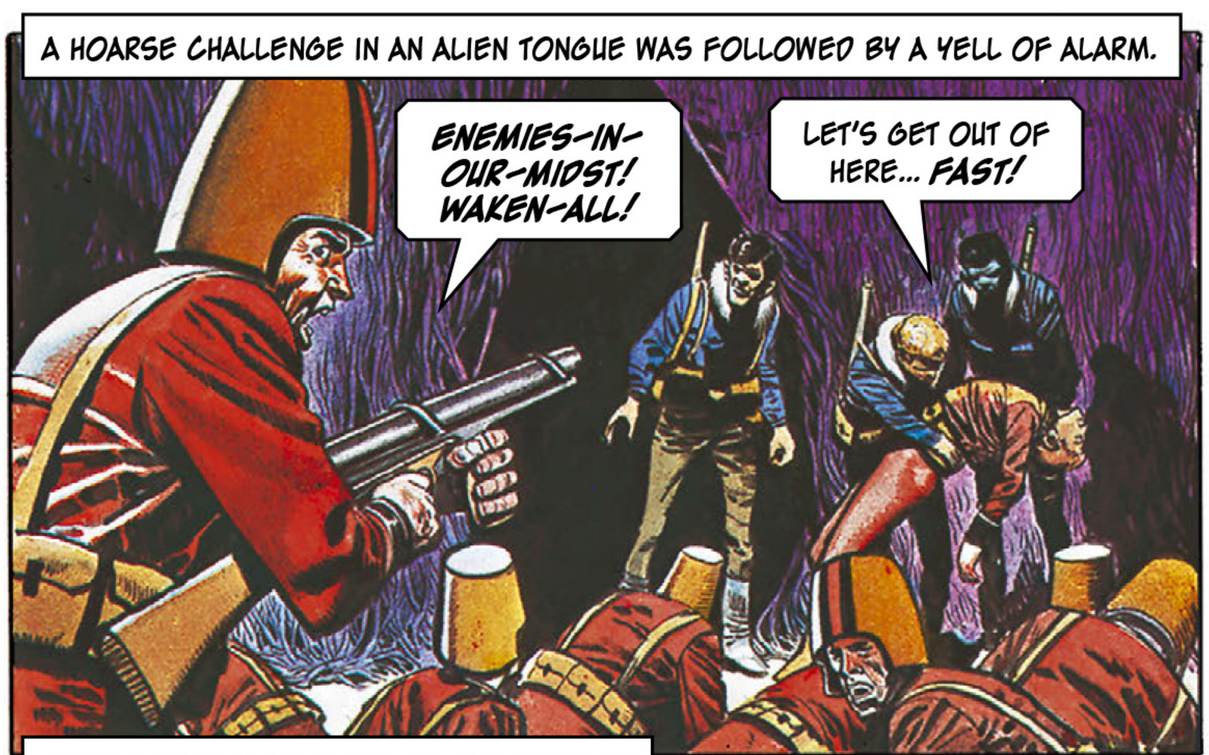
THE TRIGANS WATCHED FROM THE SHADOWS AS THE RED COHORT FROM OUTER SPACE ENTERED THE CITY.
WHAT MANNER OF CREATURES ARE THESE?

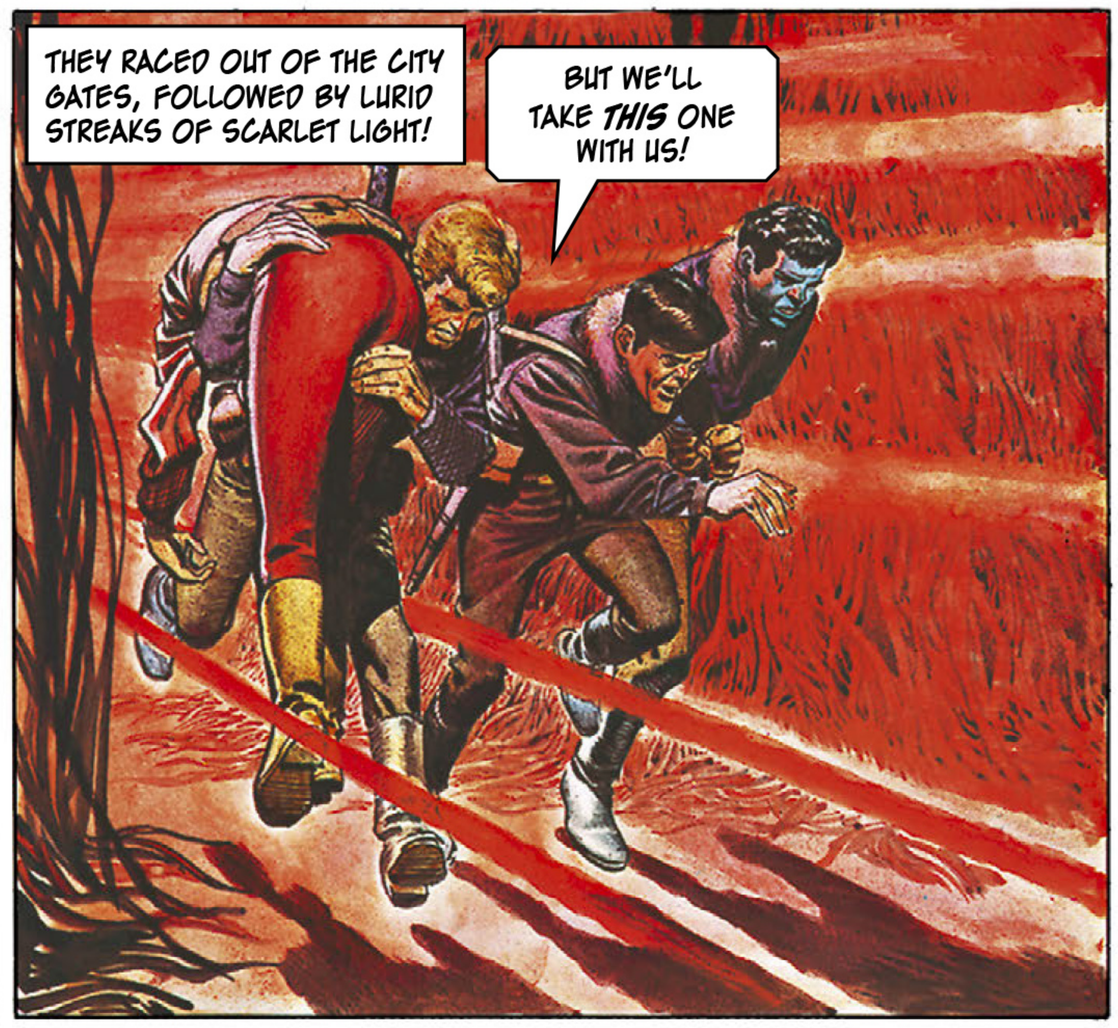
AND THEN...
WE-WILL-MAKE-CAMP-HERE-TILL-DAWN!


WHILE THE ALIEN CREATURES SLEPT, A SENTRY KEPT WATCH.

LATER, LIKE A SWOOPING BIRD OF PREY, JANNO CAME PLUMMETING DOWN!

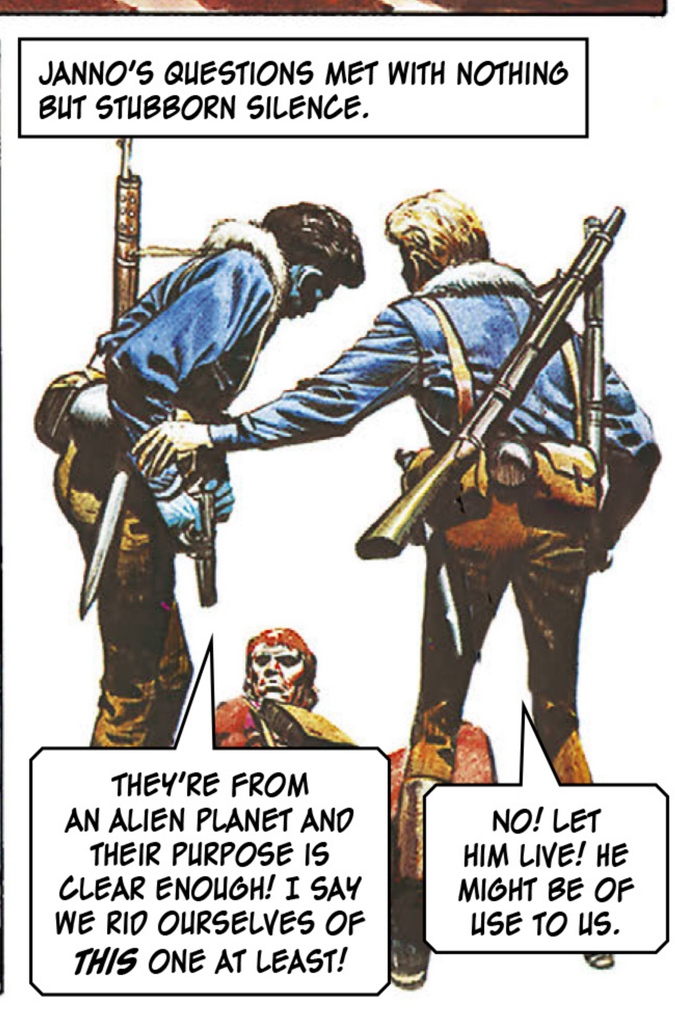

FOR A MOMENT, THE YOUNG TRIGAN THOUGHT THAT HIS ATTACK HAD GONE UNHEARD... BUT...
WAS-THAT-YOU-COMRADE?


A HOARSE CHALLENGE IN AN ALIEN TONGUE WAS FOLLOWED BY A YELL OF ALARM.
ENEMIES-IN-OUR-MIDST! WAKEN-ALL!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE... FAST!


THEY RACED OUT OF THE CITY GATES, FOLLOWED BY LURID STREAKS OF SCARLET LIGHT!
BUT WE'LL TAKE THIS ONE WITH US!

DAWN FOUND THEM CLEAR OF THE DOOMED CITY. THEY WERE NOW ON A HILL CREST ABOVE A VALLEY ALREADY INFESTED WITH THE SINISTER RED WEED.
WHO ARE THESE CREATURES AND WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?
IT'S MY BELIEF THAT THEY'RE CONNECTED WITH THE RED DEATH IN SOME WAY.
WE'LL CONFIRM THAT... IF WE CAN MAKE THIS WRETCH TALK!

A HANDFUL OF CHILL WATER FROM A NEARBY SPRING AROUSED THE RED WARRIOR.
YOU ARE NOT OF THIS PLANET, ARE YOU? WHERE DO YOU COME FROM AND WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE? SPEAK!

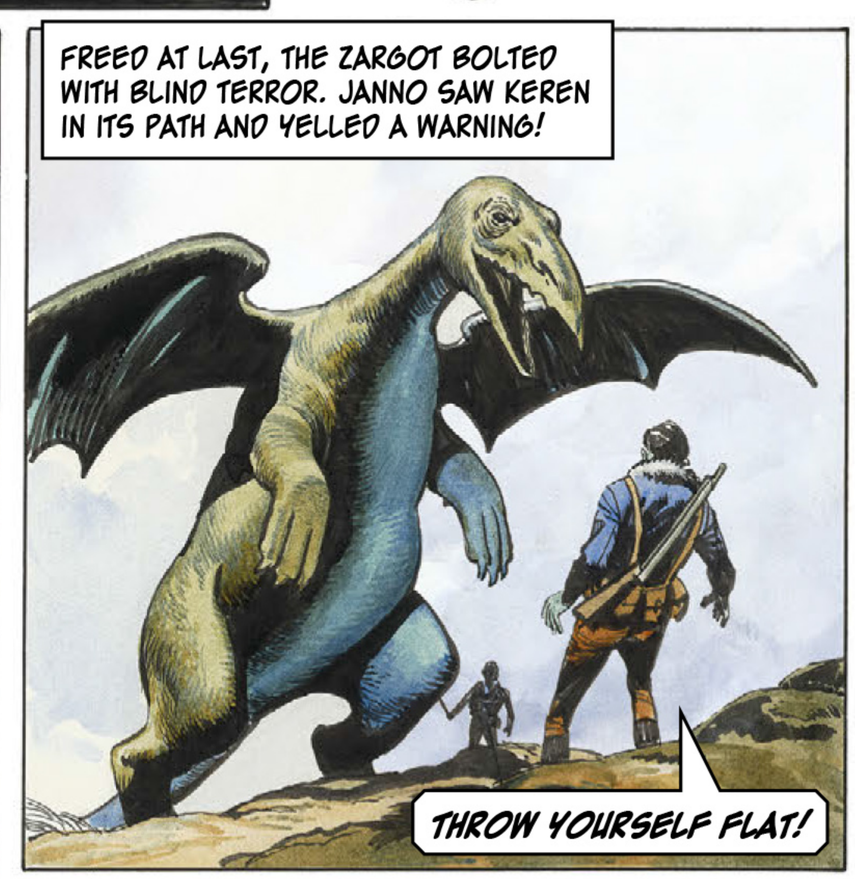

JANNO'S QUESTIONS MET WITH NOTHING BUT STUBBORN SILENCE.
THEY'RE FROM AN ALIEN PLANET AND THEIR PURPOSE IS CLEAR ENOUGH! I SAY WE RID OURSELVES OF THIS ONE AT LEAST!
NO! LET HIM LIVE! HE MIGHT BE OF USE TO US.

JANNO TURNED CASUALLY-AND FROZE IN HIS TRACKS.
LOOK!

DOWN IN THE VALLEY, A ZARGOT-ONE OF ELEKTON'S MOST FEROCIOUS BEASTS-HAD VENTURED TOO CLOSE TO THE DEADLY SCARLET WEED. ALREADY THE TENDRILS OF THE RED DEATH WERE WRAPPED ABOUT ITS BODY.
WE CAN'T LET A LIVING CREATURE-EVEN A ZARGOT-SUFFER SUCH AN AWFUL FATE!

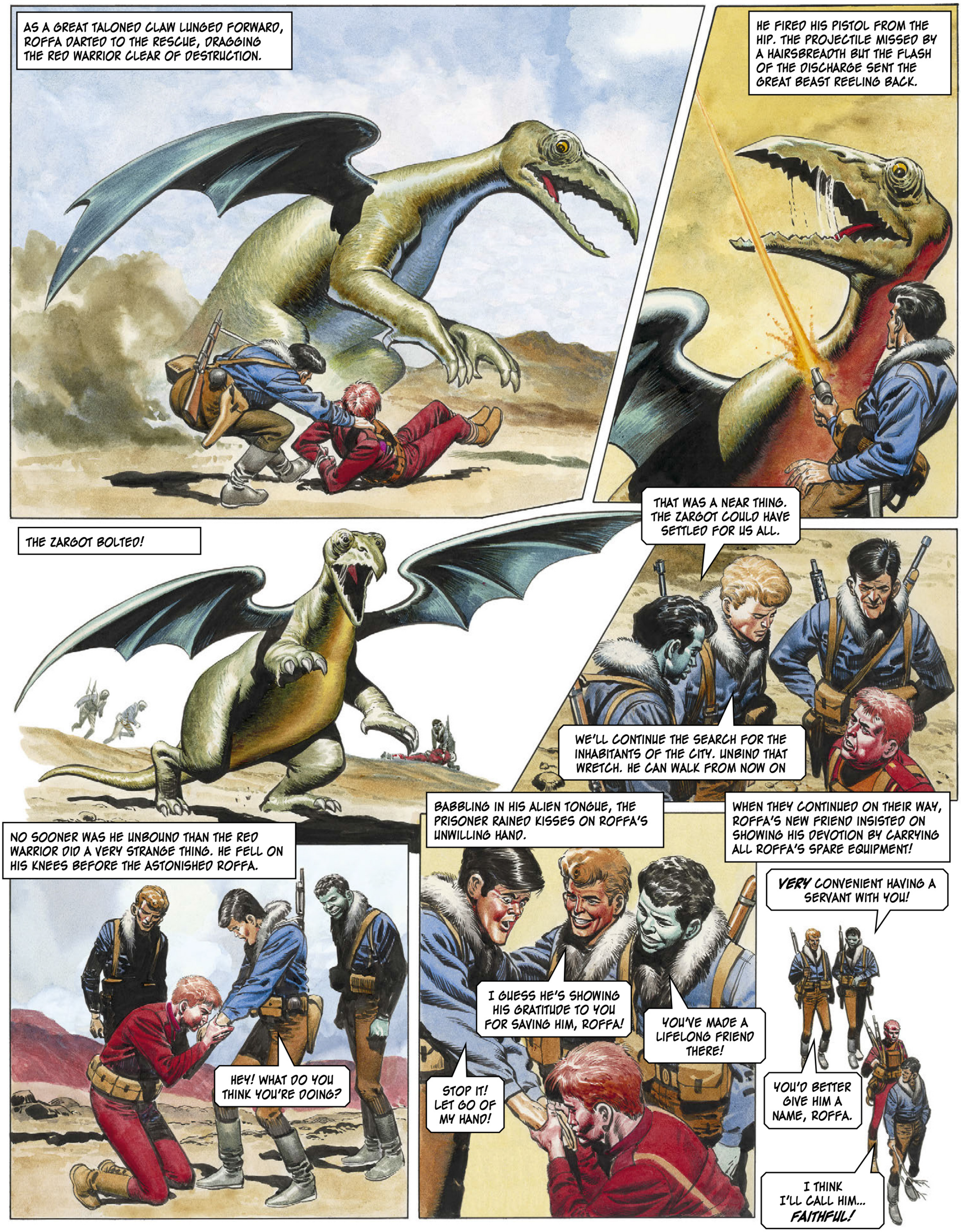
JANNO RACED DOWN THE SLOPE, DRAWING HIS BLADE.

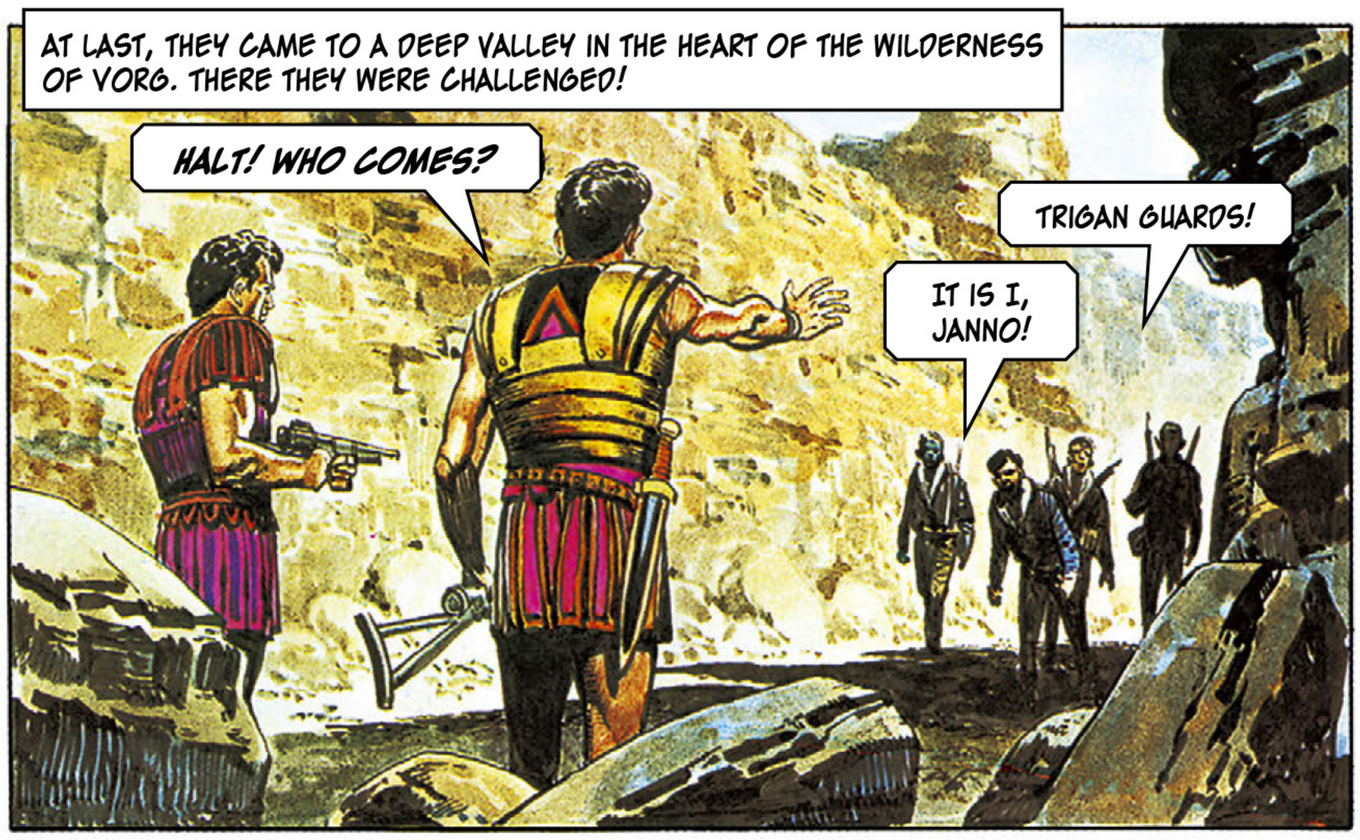
THE WEAPON FLASHED IN THE SUNLIGHT AS HE SLASHED THE GREAT BEAST FREE OF ITS LIVING BONDS!


FREED AT LAST, THE ZARGOT BOLTED WITH BLIND TERROR. JANNO SAW KEREN IN ITS PATH AND YELLED A WARNING!
THROW YOURSELF FLAT!

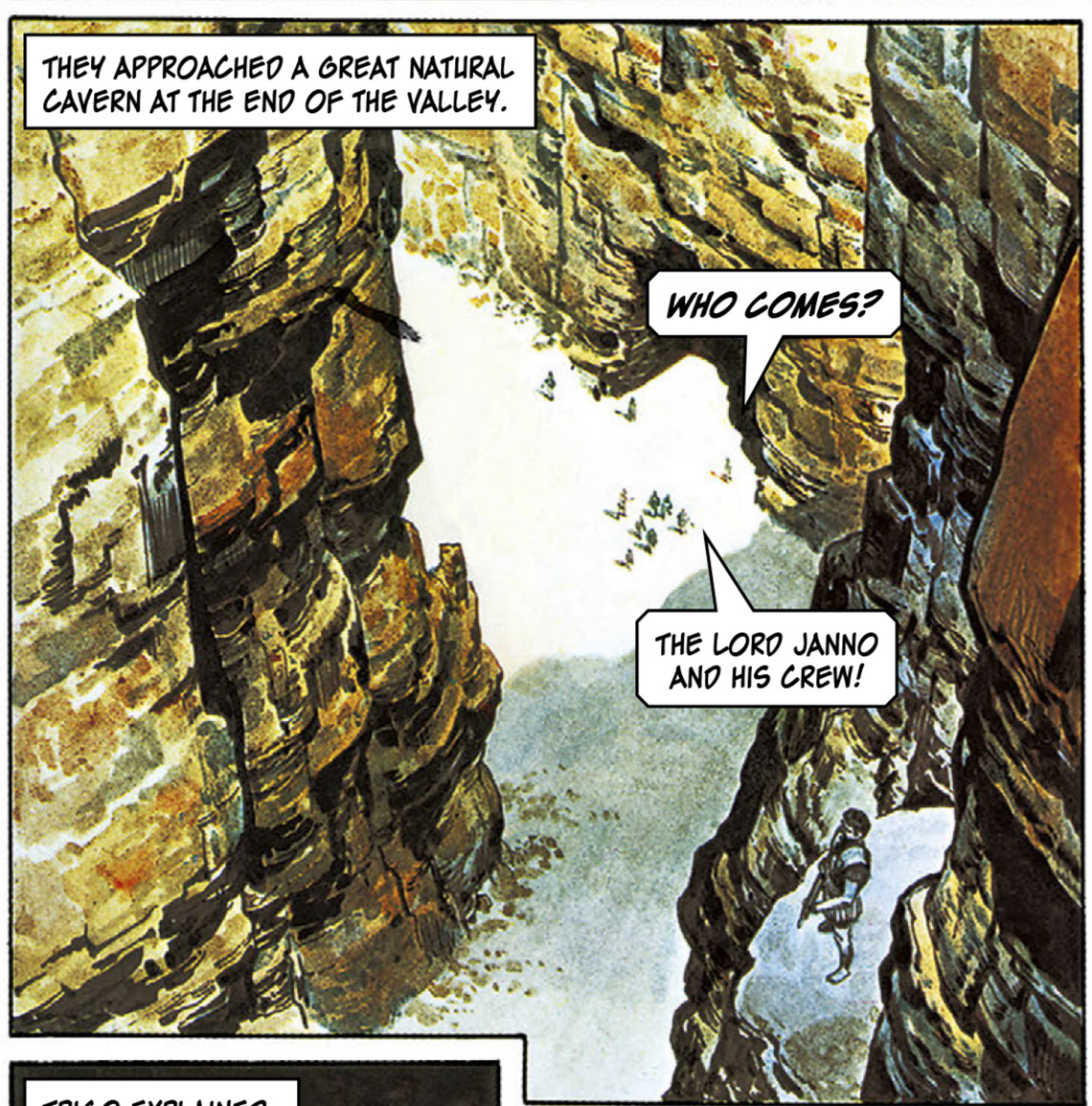
THE MASSIVE TALONED FEET MISSED KEREN BY A HAIRSBREADTH!

THE ZARGOT SLOWED SLIGHTLY ON REACHING THE HILL CREST AND LOOKED ABOUT FOR SOMETHING ON WHICH TO VENT ITS FEAR AND FURY. SUDDENLY IT SAW THE HELPLESS AND PROSTRATE CREATURE FROM THE ALIEN PLANET!
EEEEEGH!

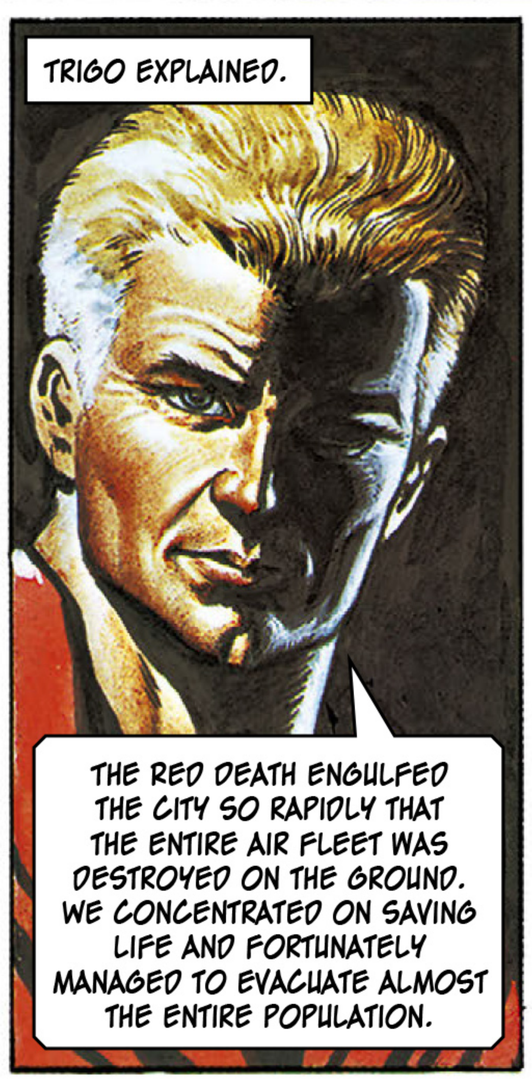

AS A GREAT TALONED CLAW LUNGED FORWARD, ROFFA DARTED TO THE RESCUE, DRAGGING THE RED WARRIOR CLEAR OF DESTRUCTION.
HE FIRED HIS PISTOL FROM THE HIP. THE PROJECTILE MISSED BY A HAIRSBREADTH BUT THE FLASH OF THE DISCHARGE SENT THE GREAT BEAST REELING BACK.
THE ZARGOT BOLTED!
THAT WAS A NEAR THING. THE ZARGOT COULD HAVE SETTLED FOR US ALL.
WE'LL CONTINUE THE SEARCH FOR THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITY. UNBIND THAT WRETCH. HE CAN WALK FROM NOW ON
NO SOONER WAS HE UNBOUND THAN THE RED WARRIOR DID A VERY STRANGE THING. HE FELL ON HIS KNEES BEFORE THE ASTONISHED ROFFA.
HEY! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
BABBLING IN HIS ALIEN TONGUE, THE PRISONER RAINED KISSES ON ROFFA'S UNWILLING HAND.
I GUESS HE'S SHOWING HIS GRATITUDE TO YOU FOR SAVING HIM, ROFFA!
YOU'VE MADE A LIFELONG FRIEND THERE!
STOP IT! LET GO OF MY HAND!
WHEN THEY CONTINUED ON THEIR WAY, ROFFA'S NEW FRIEND INSISTED ON SHOWING HIS DEVOTION BY CARRYING ALL ROFFA'S SPARE EQUIPMENT!
VERY CONVENIENT HAVING A SERVANT WITH YOU!
YOU'D BETTER GIVE HIM A NAME, ROFFA.
I THINK I'LL CALL HIM... FAITHFUL!

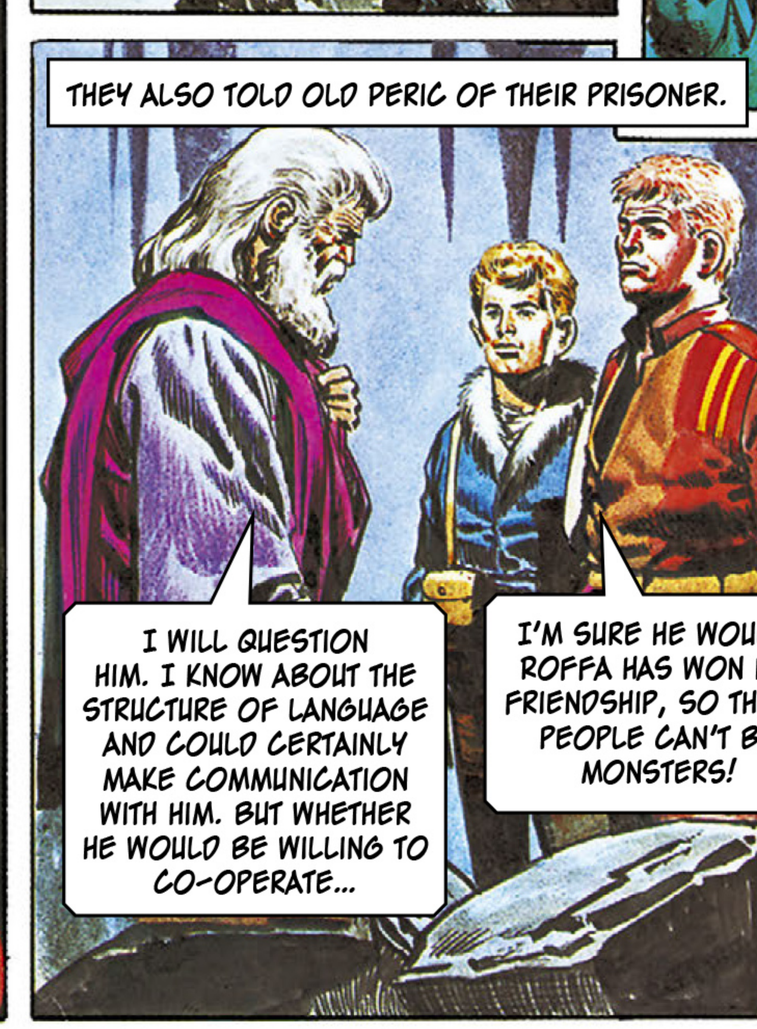

AT LAST, THEY CAME TO A DEEP VALLEY IN THE HEART OF THE WILDERNESS OF VORG. THERE THEY WERE CHALLENGED!
HALT! WHO COMES?
TRIGAN GUARDS!
IT IS I, JANNO!

GREETINGS, LORD JANNO! THANK THE STARS THAT YOU SURVIVED!
WE WILL CONDUCT YOU TO HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY AT ONCE!


THEY APPROACHED A GREAT NATURAL CAVERN AT THE END OF THE VALLEY.
WHO COMES?
THE LORD JANNO AND HIS CREW!

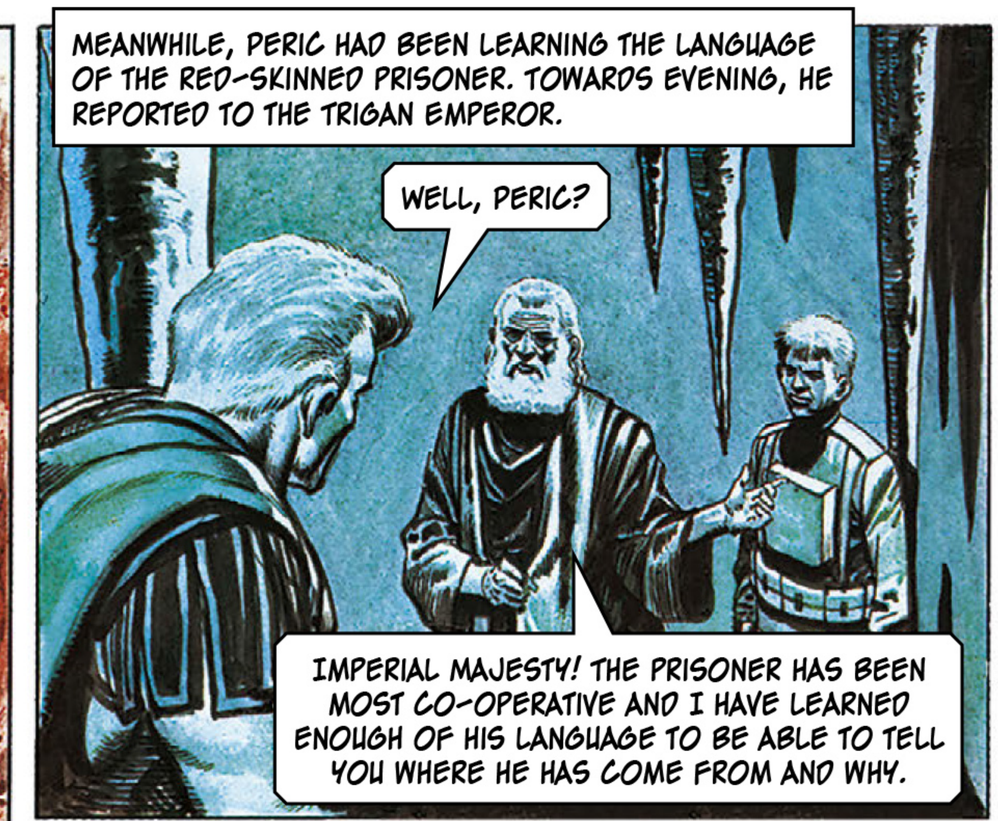
THEY FOUND THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS, JANNO'S FATHER, BRAG, AND A HOST OF TRIGAN CITIZENS.
NEPHEW!
WELL DONE, LAD!

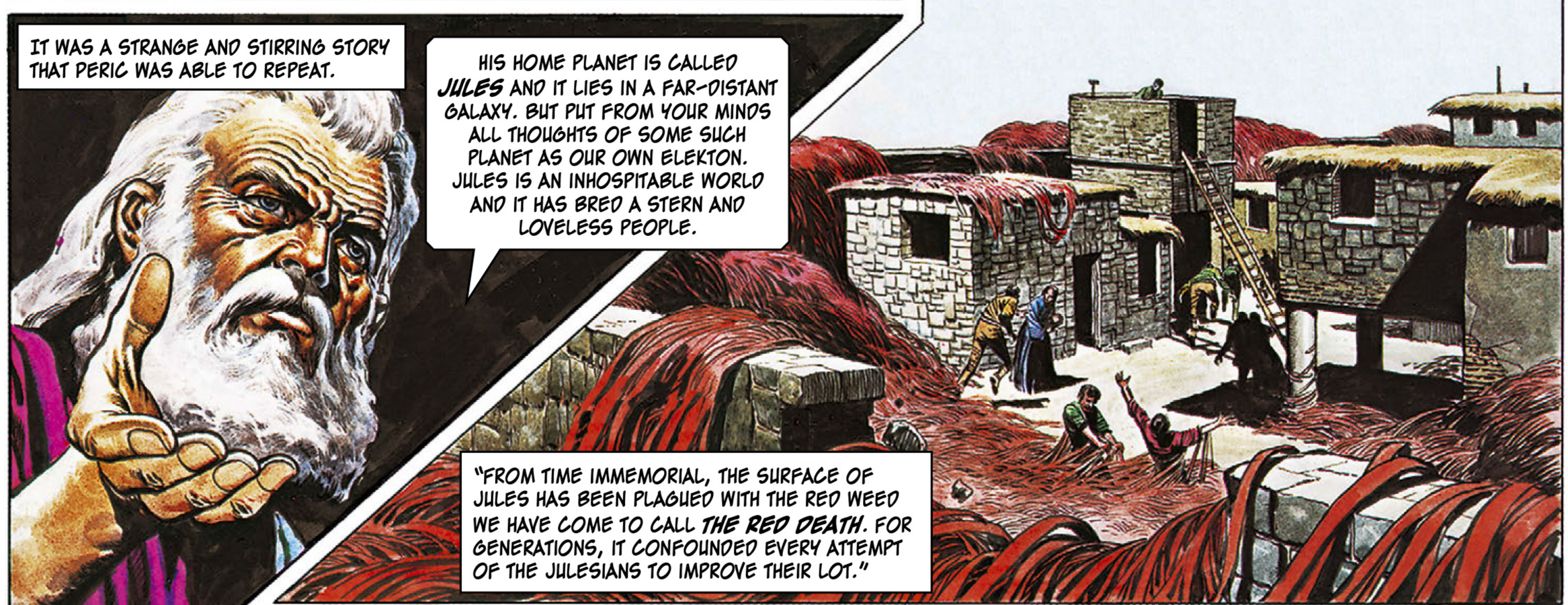

TRIGO EXPLAINED.
THE RED DEATH ENGULFED THE CITY SO RAPIDLY THAT THE ENTIRE AIR FLEET WAS DESTROYED ON THE GROUND. WE CONCENTRATED ON SAVING LIFE AND FORTUNATELY MANAGED TO EVACUATE ALMOST THE ENTIRE POPULATION.


THEY ALSO TOLD OLD PERIC OF THEIR PRISONER.
I WILL QUESTION HIM. I KNOW ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE AND COULD CERTAINLY MAKE COMMUNICATION WITH HIM. BUT WHETHER HE WOULD BE WILLING TO CO-OPERATE...
I'M SURE HE WOULD! ROFFA HAS WON HIS FRIENDSHIP, SO THESE PEOPLE CAN'T BE MONSTERS!

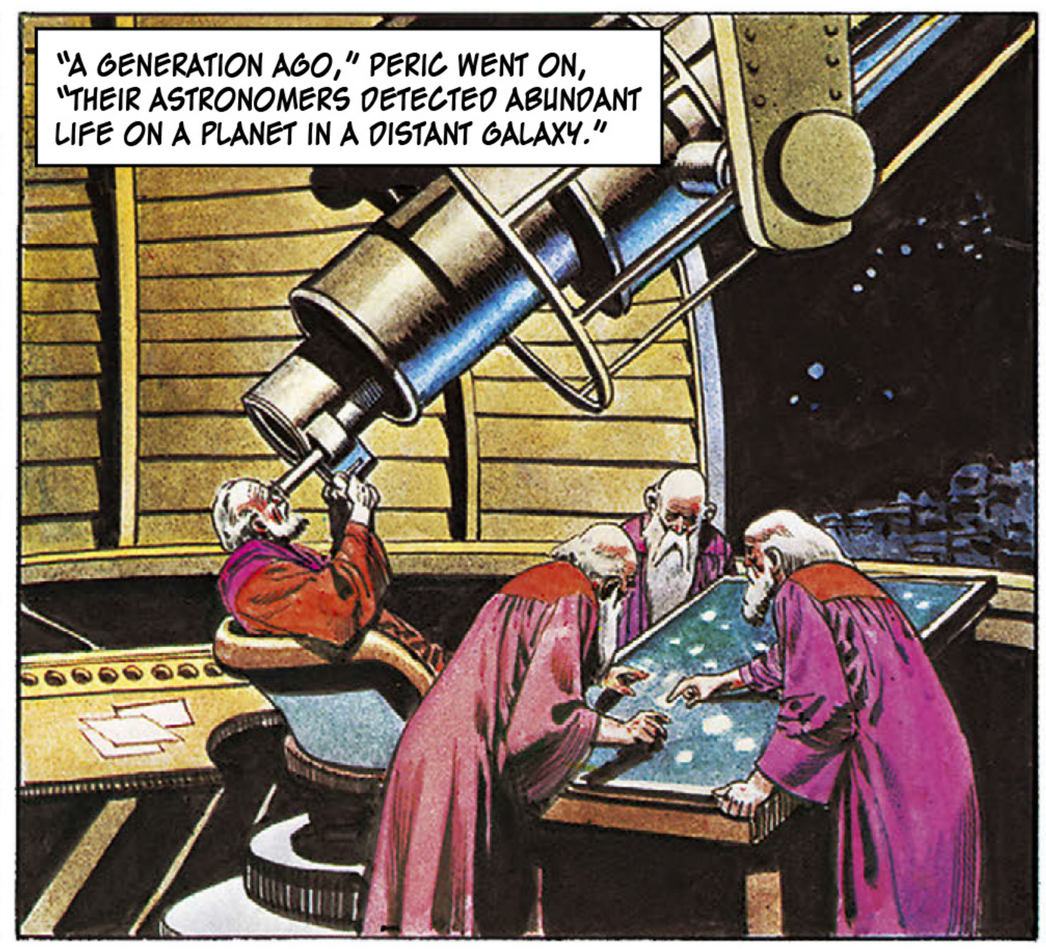
IN A QUIET CORNER OF THE CAVERN, PERIC BEGAN THE LONG AND COMPLICATED TASK OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE ALIEN FROM OUTER SPACE.
ME PERIC. YOU RED WARRIOR!
ME... RED WARRIOR!
THE FATE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND THE WHOLE PLANET DEPENDED ON THE SUCCESS OF HIS TASK!

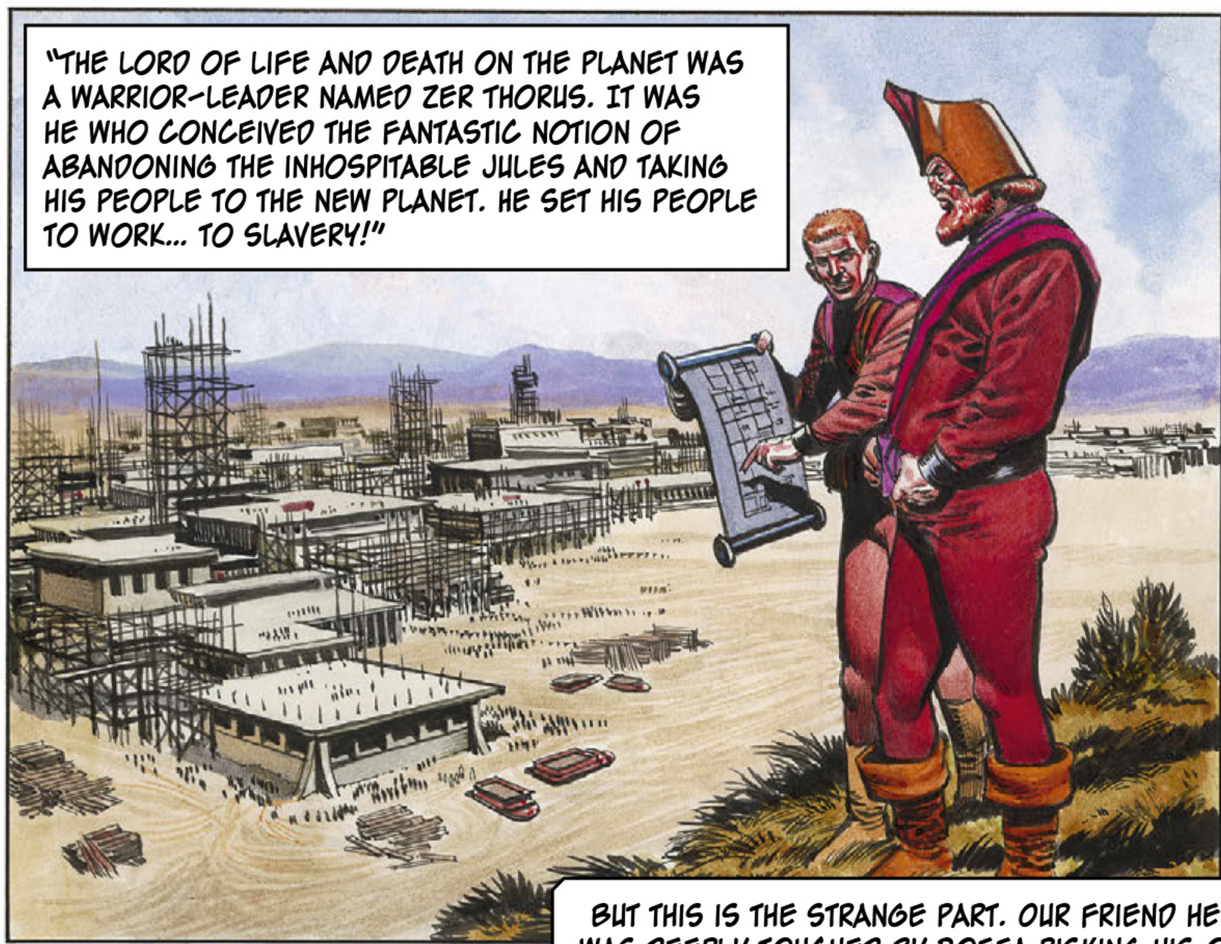
GUARDED BY A COHORT OF RED WARRIORS, TRIGAN CITY LAY DESOLATE IN THE GRIP OF THE ALL-DESTROYING WEED.

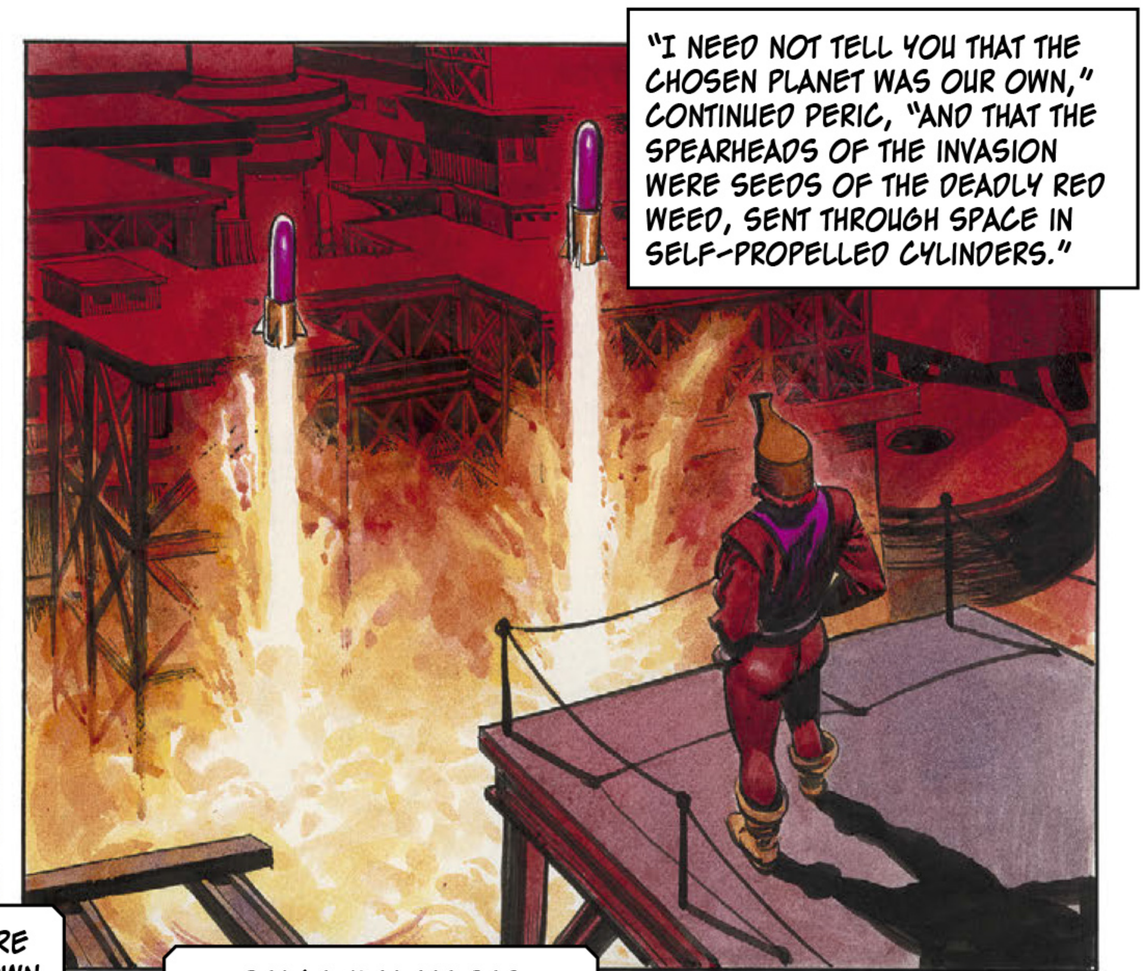

MEANWHILE, PERIC HAD BEEN LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF THE RED-SKINNED PRISONER. TOWARDS EVENING, HE REPORTED TO THE TRIGAN EMPEROR.
WELL, PERIC?
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! THE PRISONER HAS BEEN MOST CO-OPERATIVE AND I HAVE LEARNED ENOUGH OF HIS LANGUAGE TO BE ABLE TO TELL YOU WHERE HE HAS COME FROM AND WHY.


IT WAS A STRANGE AND STIRRING STORY THAT PERIC WAS ABLE TO REPEAT.
HIS HOME PLANET IS CALLED JULES AND IT LIES IN A FAR-DISTANT GALAXY. BUT PUT FROM YOUR MINDS ALL THOUGHTS OF SOME SUCH PLANET AS OUR OWN ELEKTON. JULES IS AN INHOSPITABLE WORLD AND IT HAS BRED A STERN AND LOVELESS PEOPLE.
"FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL, THE SURFACE OF JULES HAS BEEN PLAGUED WITH THE RED WEED WE HAVE COME TO CALL THE RED DEATH. FOR GENERATIONS, IT CONFOUNDED EVERY ATTEMPT OF THE JULESIANS TO IMPROVE THEIR LOT."

"BUT, BY COURAGE AND GRINDING HARD WORK, THE PEOPLE SURVIVED AND THEIR SCIENTISTS EVEN FOUND A WAY OF CONTROLLING THE RED WEED."


"A GENERATION AGO," PERIC WENT ON, "THEIR ASTRONOMERS DETECTED ABUNDANT LIFE ON A PLANET IN A DISTANT GALAXY."

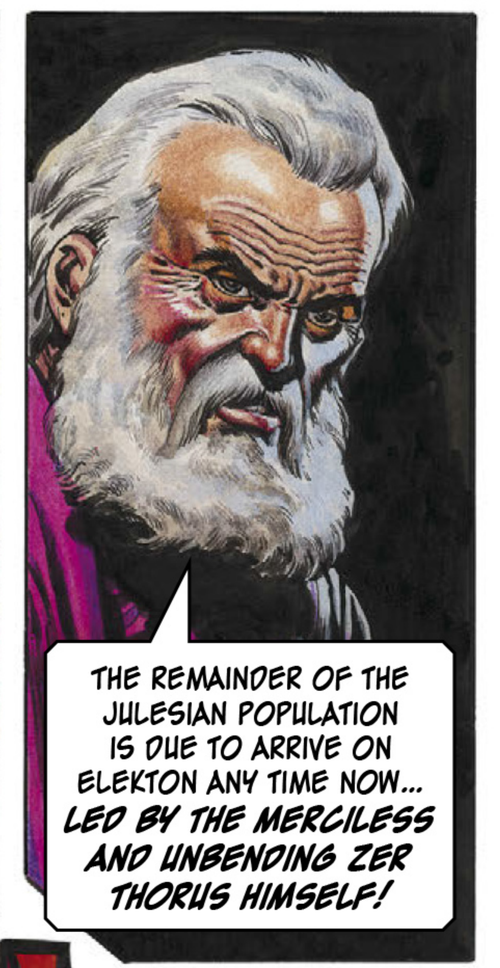

"THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH ON THE PLANET WAS A WARRIOR-LEADER NAMED ZER THORUS. IT WAS HE WHO CONCEIVED THE FANTASTIC NOTION OF ABANDONING THE INHOSPITABLE JULES AND TAKING HIS PEOPLE TO THE NEW PLANET. HE SET HIS PEOPLE TO WORK... TO SLAVERY!"

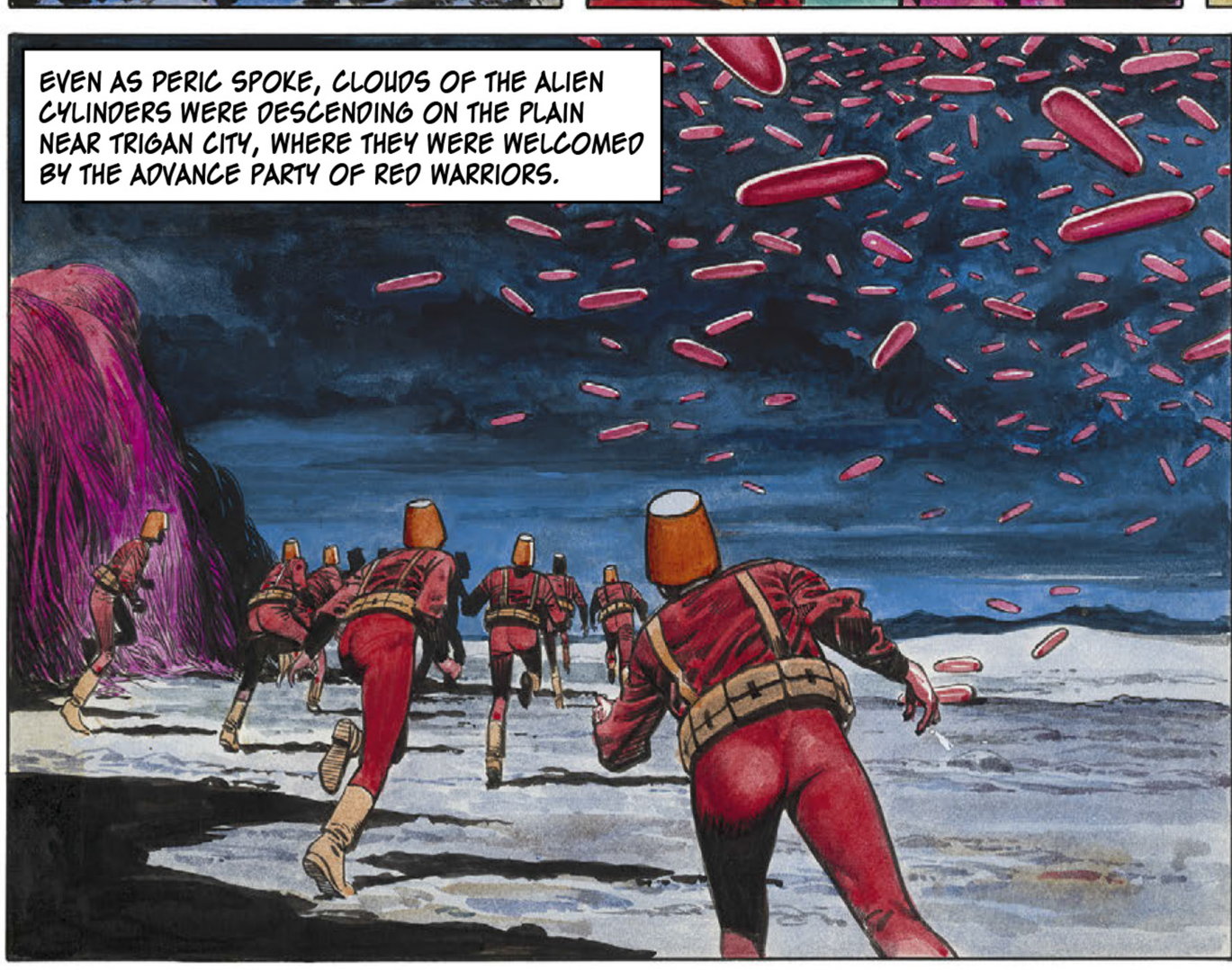

"I NEED NOT TELL YOU THAT THE CHOSEN PLANET WAS OUR OWN," CONTINUED PERIC, "AND THAT THE SPEARHEADS OF THE INVASION WERE SEEDS OF THE DEADLY RED WEED, SENT THROUGH SPACE IN SELF-PROPELLED CYLINDERS."

THE EMPEROR TRIGO BROKE IN ON PERIC'S STORY.
SO ZER THORUS'S PLAN WAS FOR THE RED DEATH TO DO HIS WORK FOR HIM AND WIPE OUT ALL LIFE ON ELEKTON!
YES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY... FOLLOWED BY A SMALL PARTY OF WARRIORS TO ELIMINATE ANY SURVIVORS.

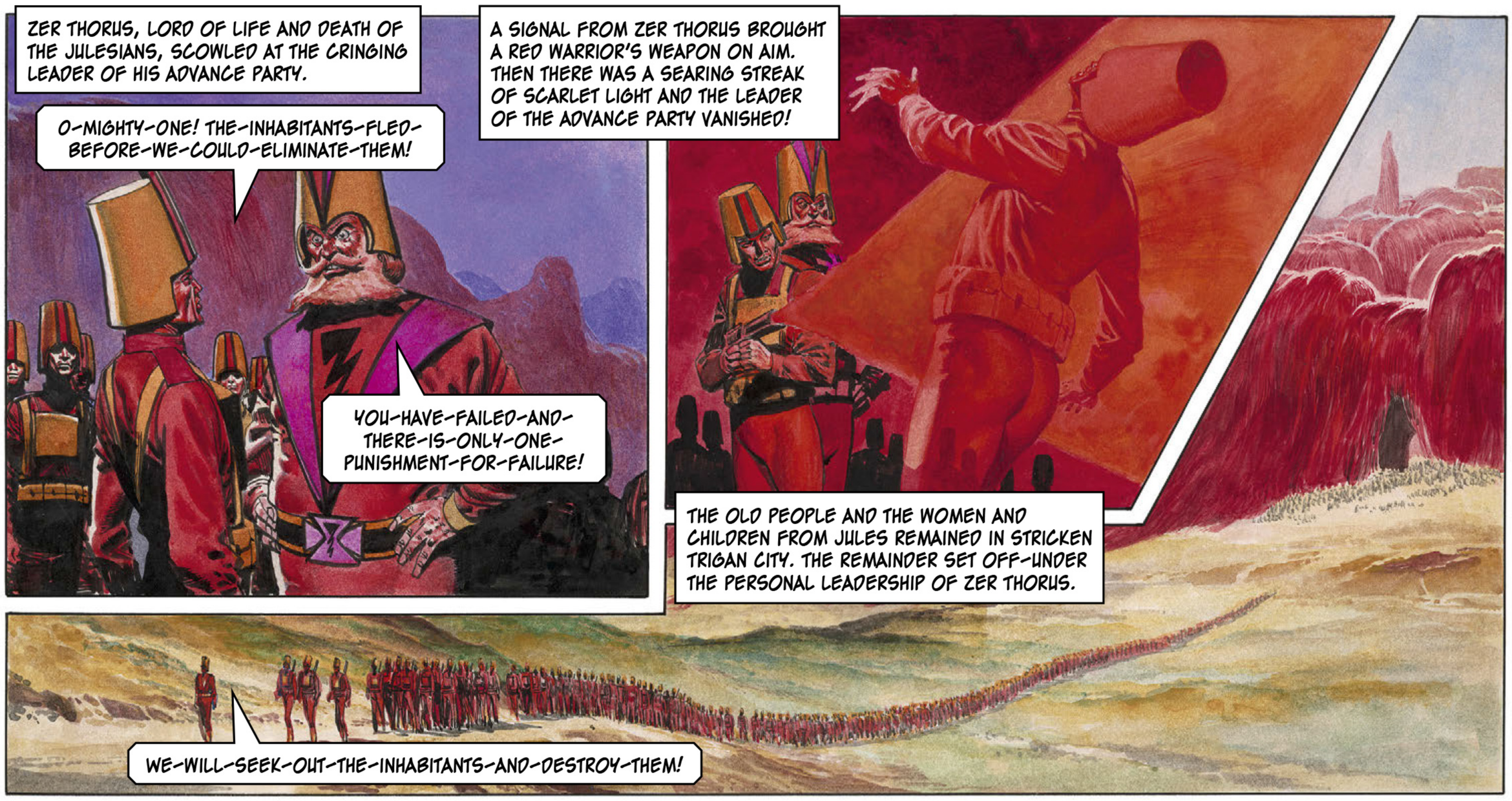
BUT THIS IS THE STRANGE PART. OUR FRIEND HERE WAS DEEPLY TOUCHED BY ROFFA RISKING HIS OWN LIFE TO SAVE HIS-AN ACTION QUITE UNHEARD OF ON HIS GRIM AND MERCILESS HOME PLANET. HE NOW SAYS THERE IS NOTHING HE WANTS TO DO BUT TO STAY WITH US AND LEARN OUR WAYS!

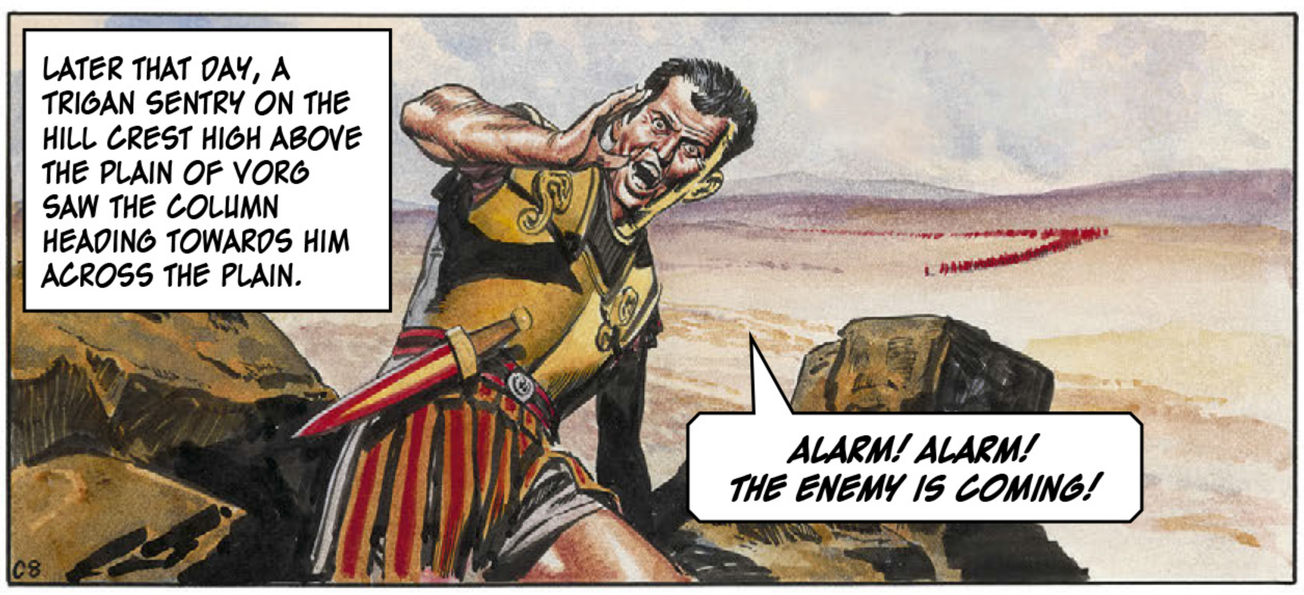
PEACE WITH THE RED WARRIORS! WHY NOT? IF WE CAN WIN OVER ONE, WE CAN WIN ALL. ACCORDING TO JANNO, THERE CAN ONLY BE FIFTY AT THE MOST!
A GOOD IDEA, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, BUT UNFORTUNATELY THERE IS ONE SNAG.

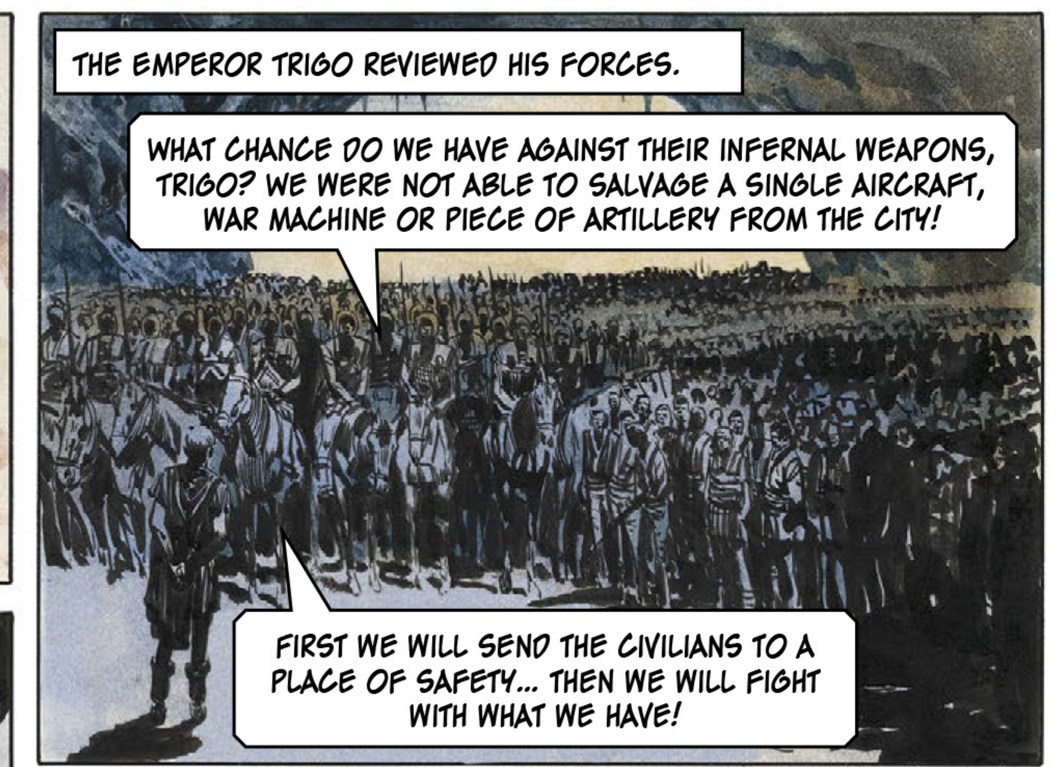

THE REMAINDER OF THE JULESIAN POPULATION IS DUE TO ARRIVE ON ELEKTON ANY TIME NOW... LED BY THE MERCILESS AND UNBENDING ZER THORUS HIMSELF!

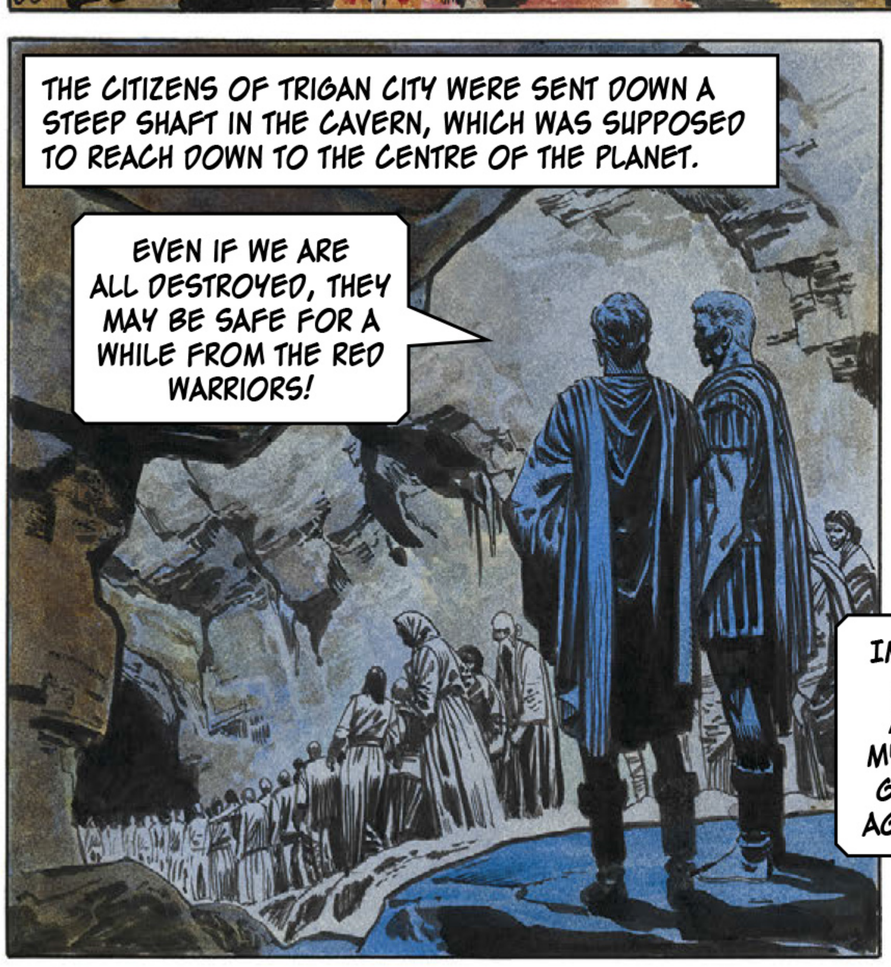

EVEN AS PERIC SPOKE, CLOUDS OF THE ALIEN CYLINDERS WERE DESCENDING ON THE PLAIN NEAR TRIGAN CITY, WHERE THEY WERE WELCOMED BY THE ADVANCE PARTY OF RED WARRIORS.

AND ZER THORUS STOOD ON THE PLANET HE COVETED!
HAVE-ALL-THE-INHABITANTS-BEEN-ELIMINATED?


ZER THORUS, LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH OF THE JULESIANS, SCOWLED AT THE CRINGING LEADER OF HIS ADVANCE PARTY.
O-MIGHTY-ONE! THE-INHABITANTS-FLED-BEFORE-WE-COULD-ELIMINATE-THEM!
YOU-HAVE-FAILED-AND-THERE-IS-ONLY-ONE-PUNISHMENT-FOR-FAILURE!
A SIGNAL FROM ZER THORUS BROUGHT A RED WARRIOR'S WEAPON ON AIM. THEN THERE WAS A SEARING STREAK OF SCARLET LIGHT AND THE LEADER OF THE ADVANCE PARTY VANISHED!
THE OLD PEOPLE AND THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM JULES REMAINED IN STRICKEN TRIGAN CITY. THE REMAINDER SET OFF-UNDER THE PERSONAL LEADERSHIP OF ZER THORUS.
WE-WILL-SEEK-OUT-THE-INHABITANTS-AND-DESTROY-THEM!


LATER THAT DAY, A TRIGAN SENTRY ON THE HILL CREST HIGH ABOVE THE PLAIN OF VORG SAW THE COLUMN HEADING TOWARDS HIM ACROSS THE PLAIN.
ALARM! ALARM! THE ENEMY IS COMING!

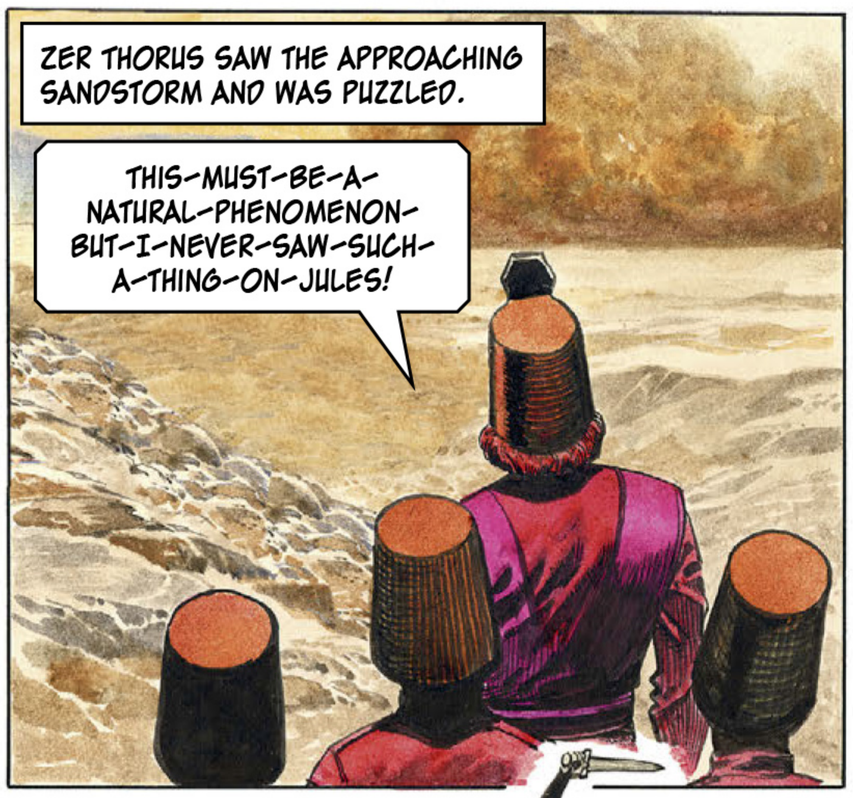

THE EMPEROR TRIGO REVIEWED HIS FORCES.
WHAT CHANCE DO WE HAVE AGAINST THEIR INFERNAL WEAPONS, TRIGO? WE WERE NOT ABLE TO SALVAGE A SINGLE AIRCRAFT, WAR MACHINE OR PIECE OF ARTILLERY FROM THE CITY!
FIRST WE WILL SEND THE CIVILIANS TO A PLACE OF SAFETY... THEN WE WILL FIGHT WITH WHAT WE HAVE!


THE CITIZENS OF TRIGAN CITY WERE SENT DOWN A STEEP SHAFT IN THE CAVERN, WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO REACH DOWN TO THE CENTRE OF THE PLANET.
EVEN IF WE ARE ALL DESTROYED, THEY MAY BE SAFE FOR A WHILE FROM THE RED WARRIORS!

WHEN THIS WAS DONE, A YOUNG COLONEL ASKED TO SPEAK WITH TRIGO. HE WAS RANNOL, COMMANDER OF THE CRACK TRIGAN LANCERS.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! GIVE THE ORDER AND I WILL LEAD MY LANCERS IN ONE GLORIOUS CHARGE AGAINST THE ENEMY!
NO, COLONEL. I PRIZE YOU AND YOUR SPLENDID MEN TOO HIGHLY TO THROW YOU AWAY ON A FUTILE GESTURE!

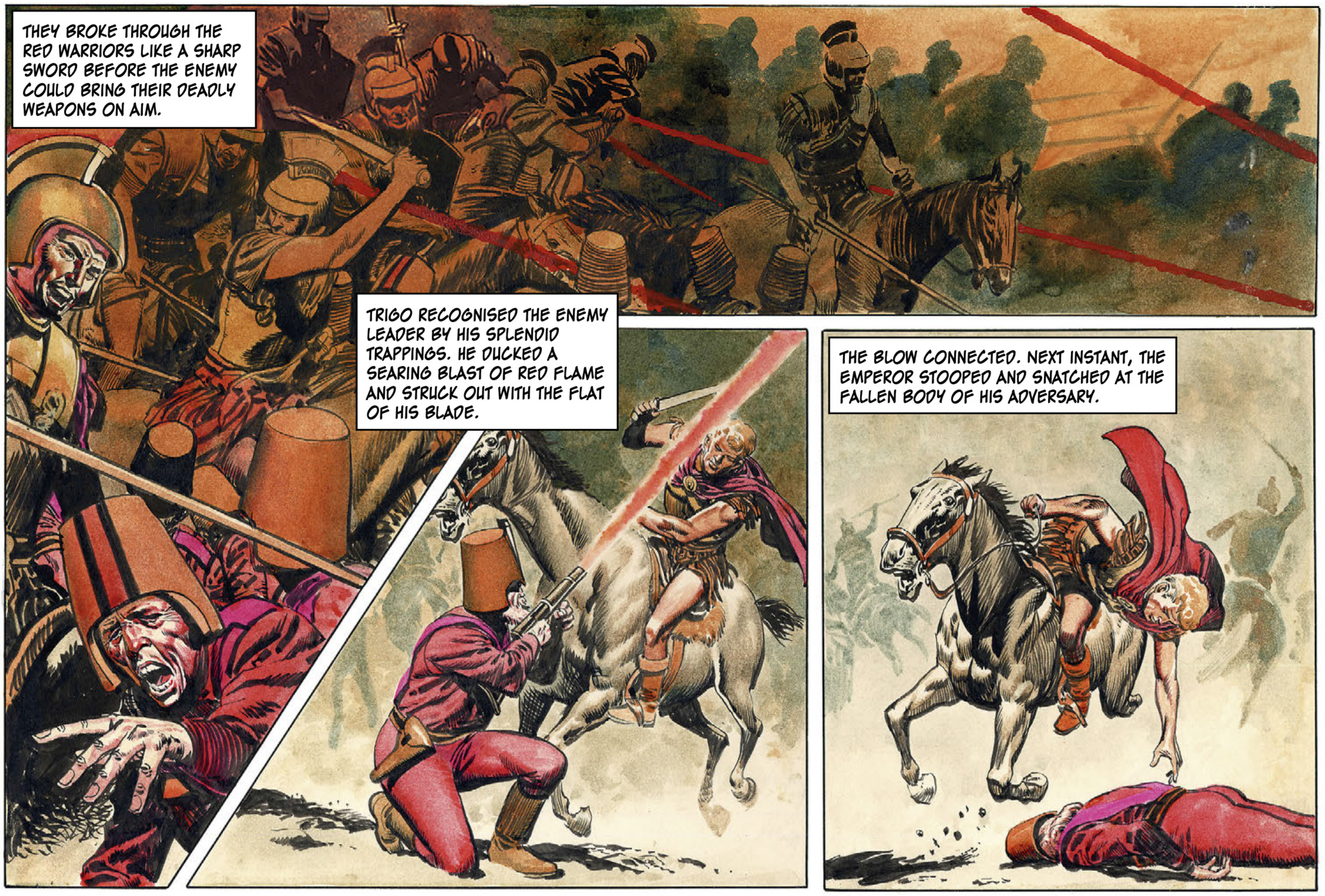
WITH HIS BROTHER, BRAG, THE EMPEROR CLIMBED TO A HIGH PROMONTORY OVERLOOKING THE PLAIN. THERE THEY SAW THE APPROACHING ENEMY... AND SOMETHING ELSE.
LOOK! THAT CLOUD ON THE HORIZON!
A SANDSTORM! AND COMING THIS WAY!

THERE WAS HOPE AND HIGH DETERMINATION IN THE VOICE OF THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS.
BRAG! I BELIEVE THE STARS HAVE NOT FORSAKEN US! THIS MAY BE OUR CHANCE!


ZER THORUS SAW THE APPROACHING SANDSTORM AND WAS PUZZLED.
THIS-MUST-BE-A-NATURAL-PHENOMENON-BUT-I-NEVER-SAW-SUCH-A-THING-ON-JULES!

INSTANTS LATER, THE RED WARRIORS WERE STAGGERING THROUGH BLINDING, SWIRLING SAND AS THE FULL FORCE OF THE STORM HIT THEM.

AND THEN... IT HAPPENED! WILD, STIRRING WAR CRIES WERE HEARD AND COLONEL RANNOL'S LANCERS BROKE OUT OF THE MURK WITH TRIGO AT THEIR HEAD.


THEY BROKE THROUGH THE RED WARRIORS LIKE A SHARP SWORD BEFORE THE ENEMY COULD BRING THEIR DEADLY WEAPONS ON AIM.
TRIGO RECOGNISED THE ENEMY LEADER BY HIS SPLENDID TRAPPINGS. HE DUCKED A SEARING BLAST OF RED FLAME AND STRUCK OUT WITH THE FLAT OF HIS BLADE.
THE BLOW CONNECTED. NEXT INSTANT, THE EMPEROR STOOPED AND SNATCHED AT THE FALLEN BODY OF HIS ADVERSARY.

TRIGO GALLOPED CLEAR OF THE FIGHTING WITH HIS UNCONSCIOUS PRISONER. BUT THEN THE SANDSTORM THICKENED AND SOON HIS MOUNT WAS PLUNGING BLINDLY THROUGH THE SWIRLING MURK.

NOT A STAR TO GUIDE ME!

WHEN THE STORM CLEARED, HE FOUND HIMSELF ON A GREAT PLAIN. NIGHT HAD FALLEN AND THE SKY WAS BLACK.

AS A DESCENDANT OF THE NOMAD HUNTERS OF VORG, THE TRIGAN EMPEROR FOLLOWED THE OLD CUSTOM OF GIVING HIS MOUNT HIS HEAD. WHEN DAWN CAME, THE KREED HAD FOUND ITS WAY TO A LIFE-GIVING WATER HOLE.

GOOD! WE CAN DRINK OUR FILL, THEN FIND OUR WAY BACK TO THE TRIGANS.

IT WAS THE KREED'S LAST ACTION. BY THE WATER HOLE IT PERISHED FROM THE BITE OF A DEADLY NOBRA.

OH, NO!

SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, ZER THORUS RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS—TO FIND HIMSELF LOOKING INTO THE LEVELLED MUZZLE OF HIS OWN WEAPON.

YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD I SAY, ZER THORUS, BUT WE ARE LOST. FROM NOW ON WE CEASE TO BE ENEMIES. WE ARE JUST TWO MEN AGAINST THE WILDERNESS.

THE RED WARRIOR LEADER LEARNED SOMETHING OF TRIGO'S MEANING WHEN HE SAW THE DEADLY WEAPON SPINNING INTO THE WATER HOLE.

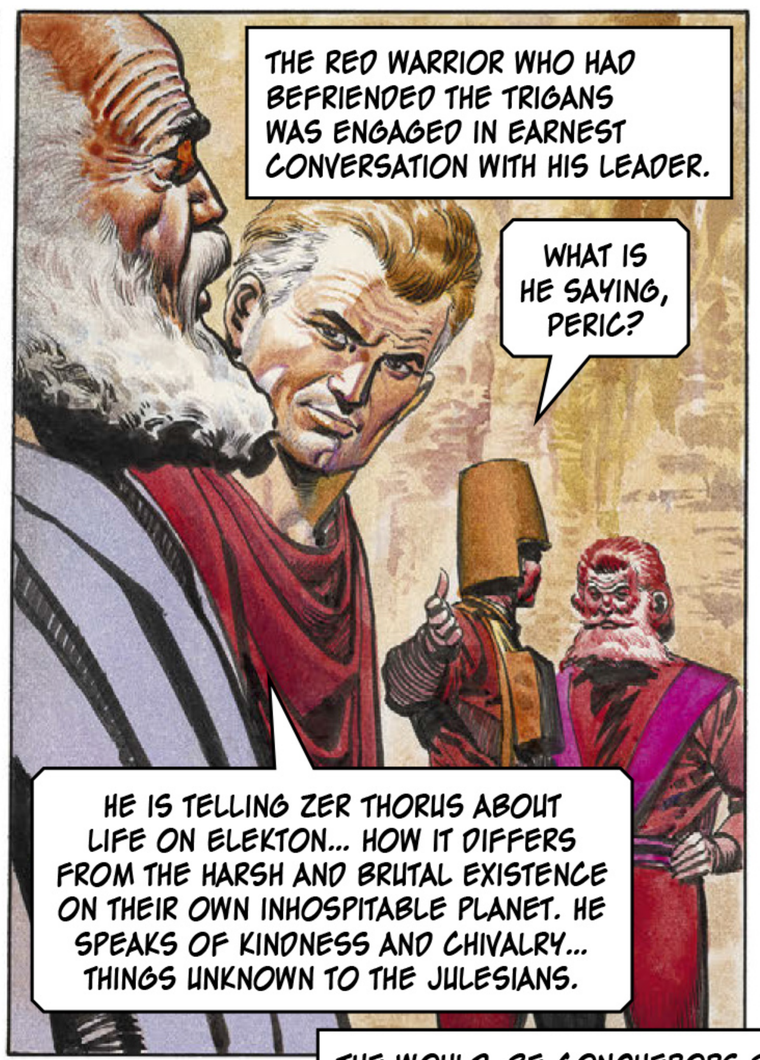
NO MORE FIGHTING! NOW... *WE MARCH!*

ALL THROUGH THAT DAY THEY TRUDGED IN THE SEARING HEAT...

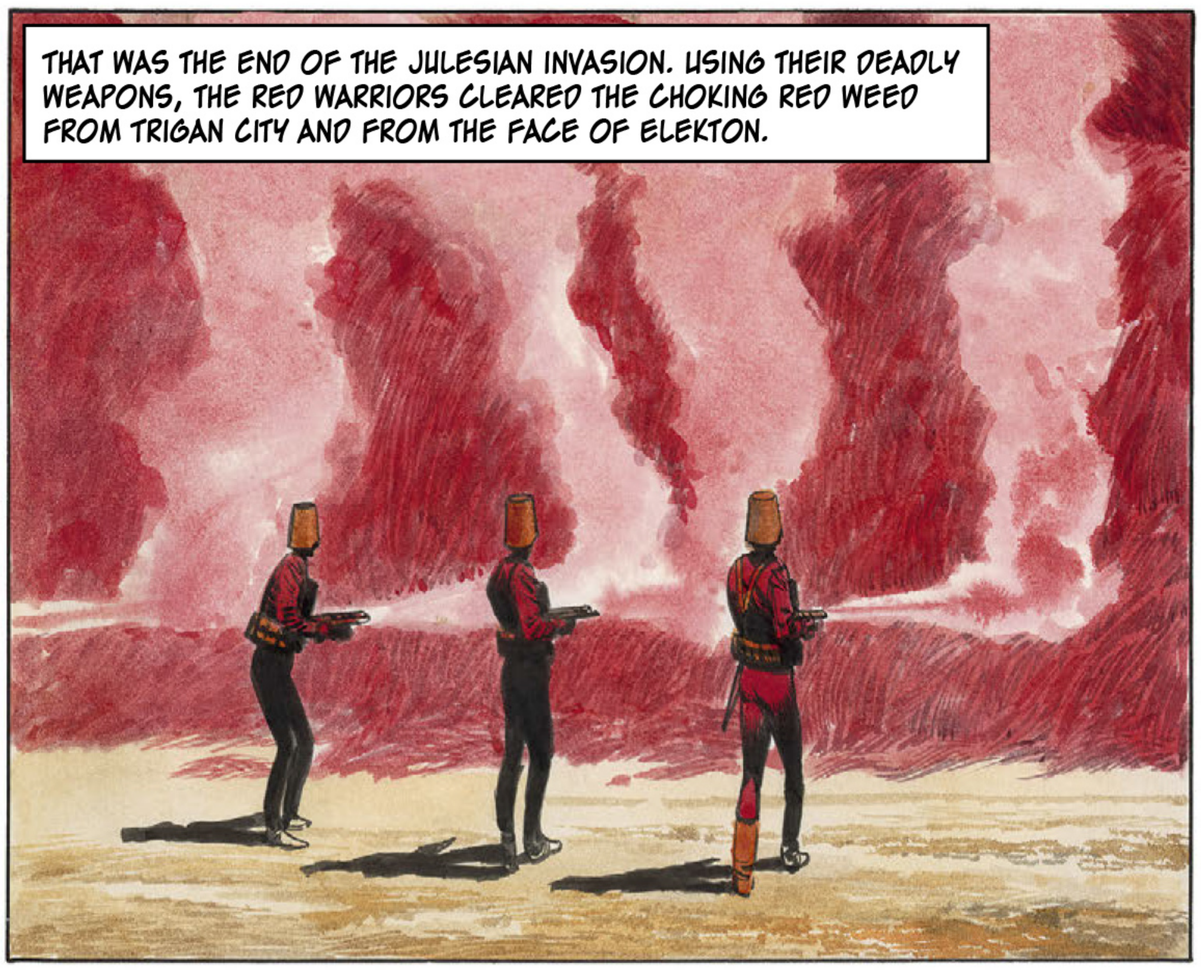
...AND WHEN ZER THORUS FELL, THE TRIGAN EMPEROR PICKED HIM UP AND SLUNG HIM ACROSS HIS BROAD BACK.

ON THE MORNING OF THE SECOND DAY, THEY CAME TO THE VALLEY WHERE A HORDE OF TRIGANS AND JULESIANS GREETED THEM.
IT'S THE EMPEROR! AND HE'S GOT THE RED WARRIOR LEADER!

JANNO TOLD HIS UNCLE WHAT HAD TAKEN PLACE DURING HIS ABSENCE.
WE FOUGHT THEM TO A STANDSTILL IN THE SANDSTORM, HAND-TO-HAND. AND WHEN IT CLEARED AND THEY SAW THEIR LEADER GONE,- ALL THE HEART WENT OUT OF THEM!


THE RED WARRIOR WHO HAD BEFRIENDED THE TRIGANS WAS ENGAGED IN EARNEST CONVERSATION WITH HIS LEADER.
WHAT IS HE SAYING, PERIC?
HE IS TELLING ZER THORUS ABOUT LIFE ON ELEKTON... HOW IT DIFFERS FROM THE HARSH AND BRUTAL EXISTENCE ON THEIR OWN INHOSPITABLE PLANET. HE SPEAKS OF KINDNESS AND CHIVALRY... THINGS UNKNOWN TO THE JULESIANS.

ZER THORUS LISTENED TO THE WARRIOR... AND THEN HE APPROACHED TRIGO WITH HIS HAND OUTSTRETCHED.
IS THIS... FRIENDSHIP?
FRIEND-SHIP!


THAT WAS THE END OF THE JULESIAN INVASION. USING THEIR DEADLY WEAPONS, THE RED WARRIORS CLEARED THE CHOKING RED WEED FROM TRIGAN CITY AND FROM THE FACE OF ELEKTON.

THE WOULD-BE CONQUERORS BECAME A SEPARATE NATION OF ELEKTON, OCCUPYING A PART OF THE PLAIN OF VORG, WHICH THEY CULTIVATED AND MADE FERTILE. AS EQUAL MEMBERS OF THE GREAT TRIGAN EMPIRE, THEY WERE REPRESENTED BY ZER THORUS AT THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL.
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!

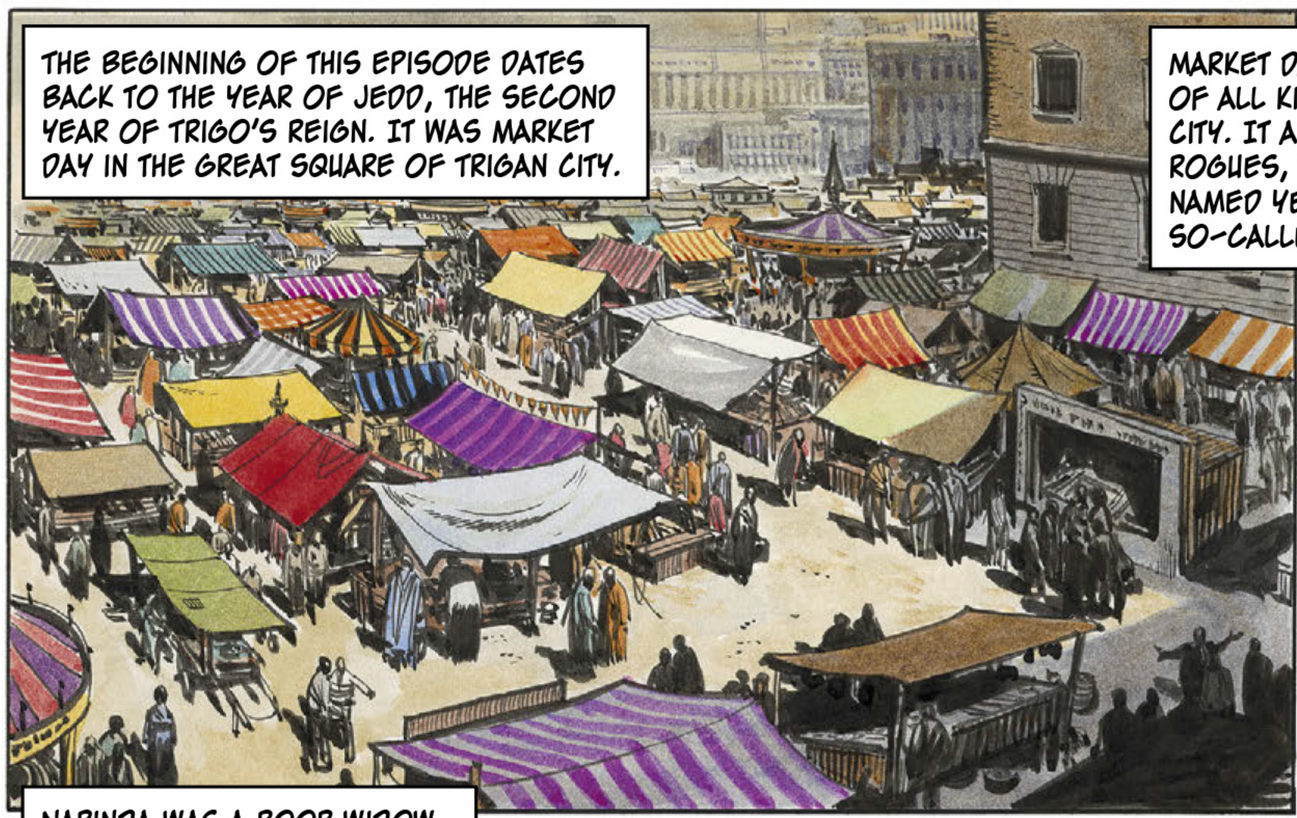
XXII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE PUPPET EMPEROR

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 425-438

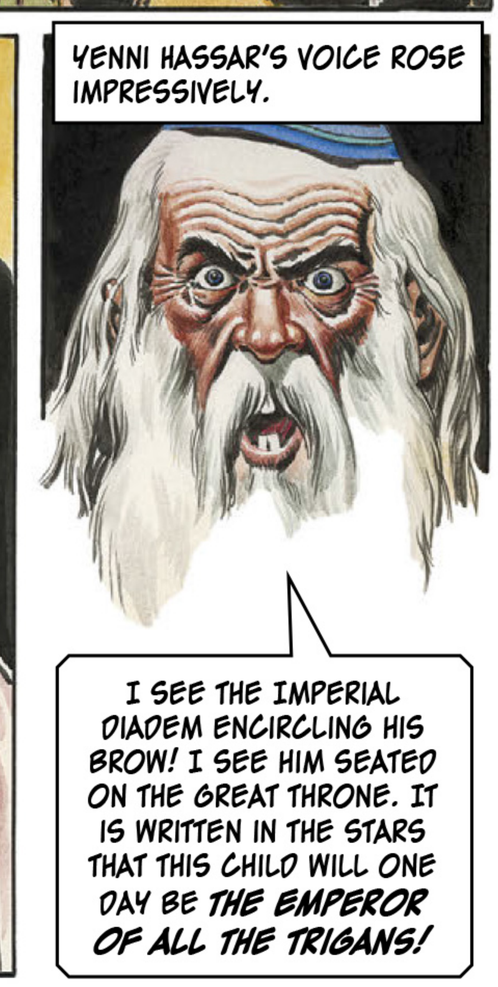
7th March – 6th June 1970


THE BEGINNING OF THIS EPISODE DATES BACK TO THE YEAR OF JEDO, THE SECOND YEAR OF TRIGO'S REIGN. IT WAS MARKET DAY IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN CITY.

MARKET DAY BROUGHT TRADERS OF ALL KINDS TO THE IMPERIAL CITY. IT ALSO BROUGHT MANY ROGUES, INCLUDING A MAN NAMED YENNI HASSAR, A SO-CALLED FORTUNE TELLER.
STEP FORTH, GOOD PEOPLE. PAY ONLY ONE DRACHO AND YENNI HASSAR WILL CALL FORTH YOUR FUTURE FROM THE STARS!

NARINDA WAS A POOR WIDOW WITH AN INFANT SON. SHE HAD ONE DRACHO... AND A WISH.
WISE ONE! I KNOW IN MY HEART THAT MY SON IS DESTINED FOR GREAT THINGS. WILL YOU TELL ME HIS FUTURE?
NEVER FEAR, MOTHER. NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM YENNI HASSAR!

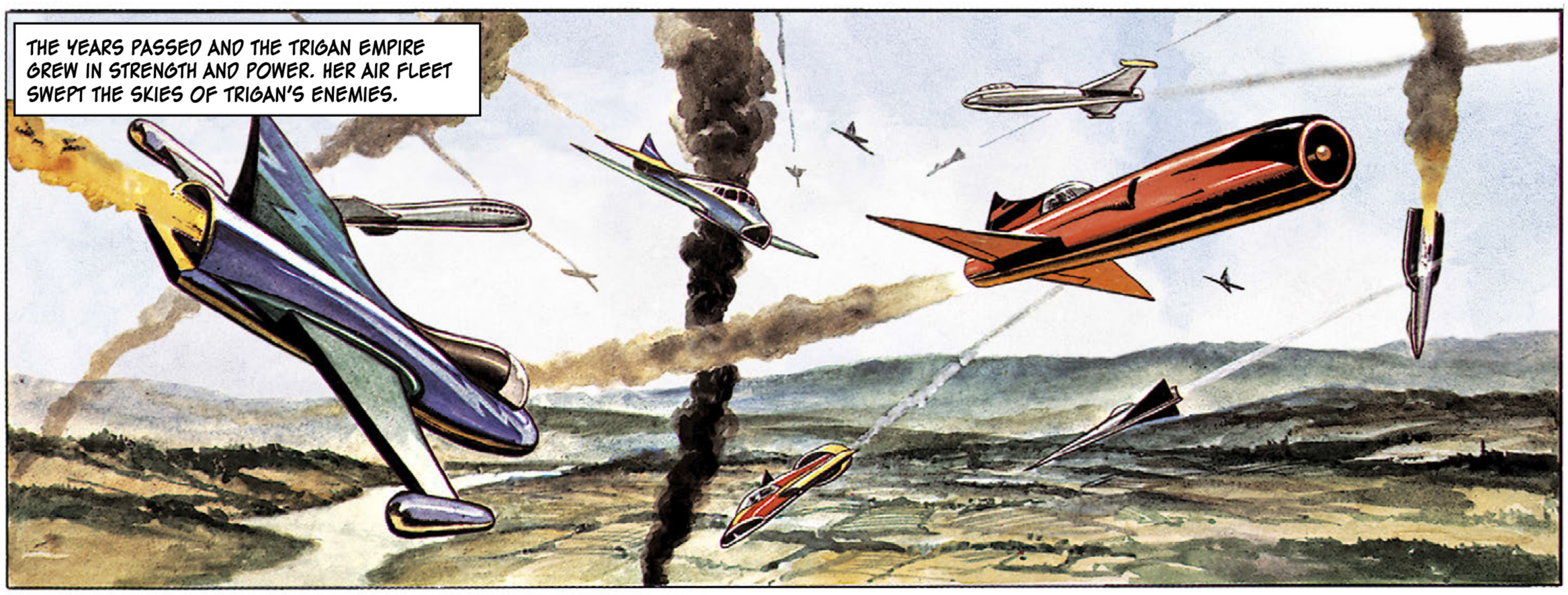
THE WHITE-BEARDED OLD ROGUE TOOK THE INFANT IN HIS ARMS AND...
WHAT DO YOU SEE, WISE ONE?
BY THE STARS OF ELEKTON! THIS IS ASTONISHING!


YENNI HASSAR'S VOICE ROSE IMPRESSIVELY.
I SEE THE IMPERIAL DIADEM ENCIRCLING HIS BROW! I SEE HIM SEATED ON THE GREAT THRONE. IT IS WRITTEN IN THE STARS THAT THIS CHILD WILL ONE DAY BE THE EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS!

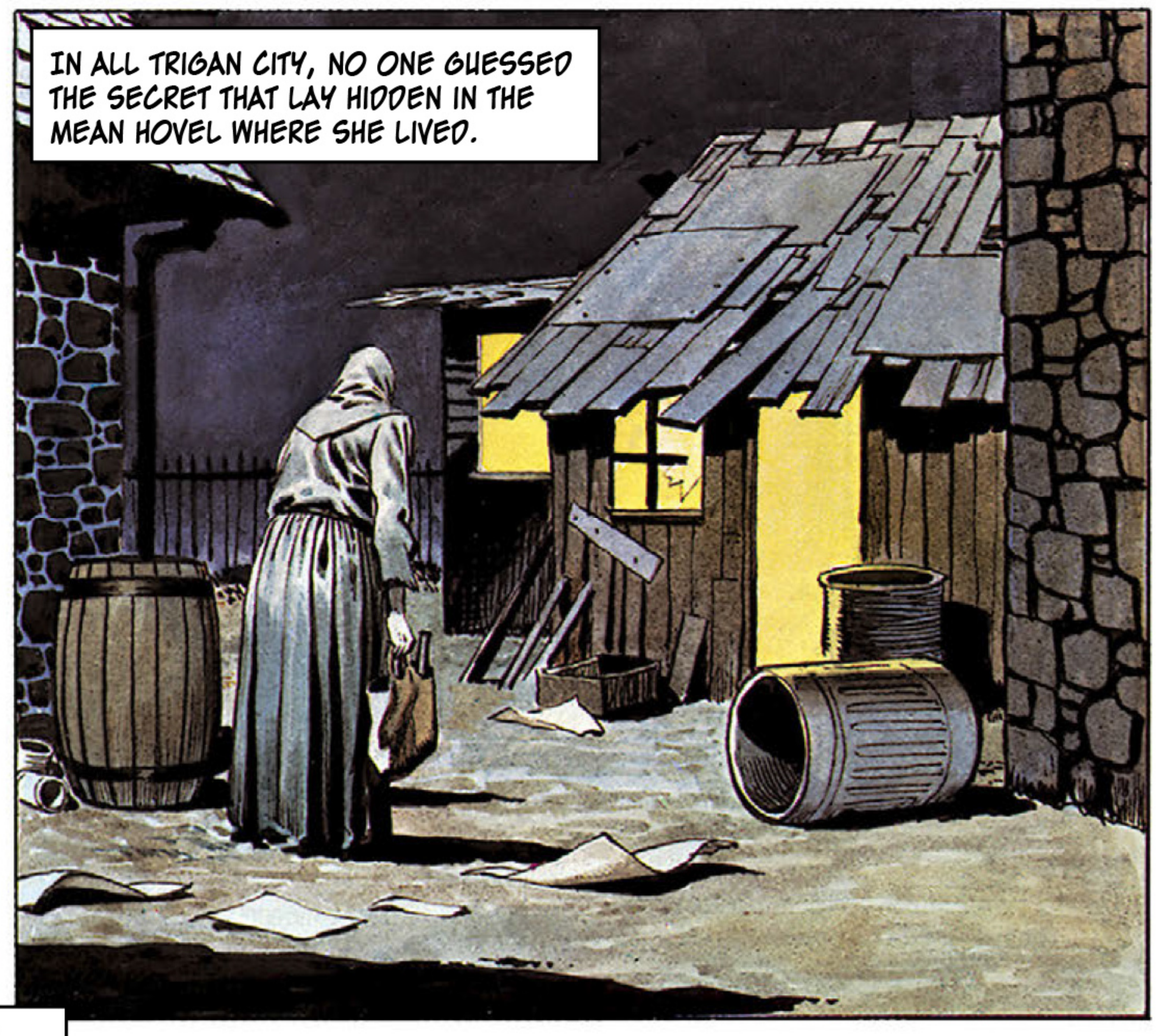
NARINDA'S EYES WIDENED IN AWE AND JOY.
EMPEROR! MY SON! YES... I KNEW THERE WAS A GREATNESS IN HIM!

LATER, WHEN THE CROWDS HAD DISPERSED...
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO SAY A THING LIKE THAT, YOU DODDERING OLD FOOL? SHE'D HAVE BEEN CONTENT IF YOU'D TOLD HER THE BRAT WOULD GROW UP TO BE RICH AND HANDSOME!

YENNI HASSAR REPLIED... TRUTHFULLY.
THAT IS THE STRANGE THING. ALL MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN AN IMPOSTOR BUT, JUST NOW, I SWEAR I SAW IN THE STARS THAT THE CHILD WOULD BE EMPEROR!


THE YEARS PASSED AND THE TRIGAN EMPIRE GREW IN STRENGTH AND POWER. HER AIR FLEET SWEPT THE SKIES OF TRIGAN'S ENEMIES.

IN ALL THOSE YEARS, THE WIDOW NARINDA NEVER FORGOT YENNI HASSAR'S PROPHECY.
SHE WORKED AND SLAVED FROM MORNING TILL NIGHT. WHAT SHE DID NOT EARN, SHE STOLE.

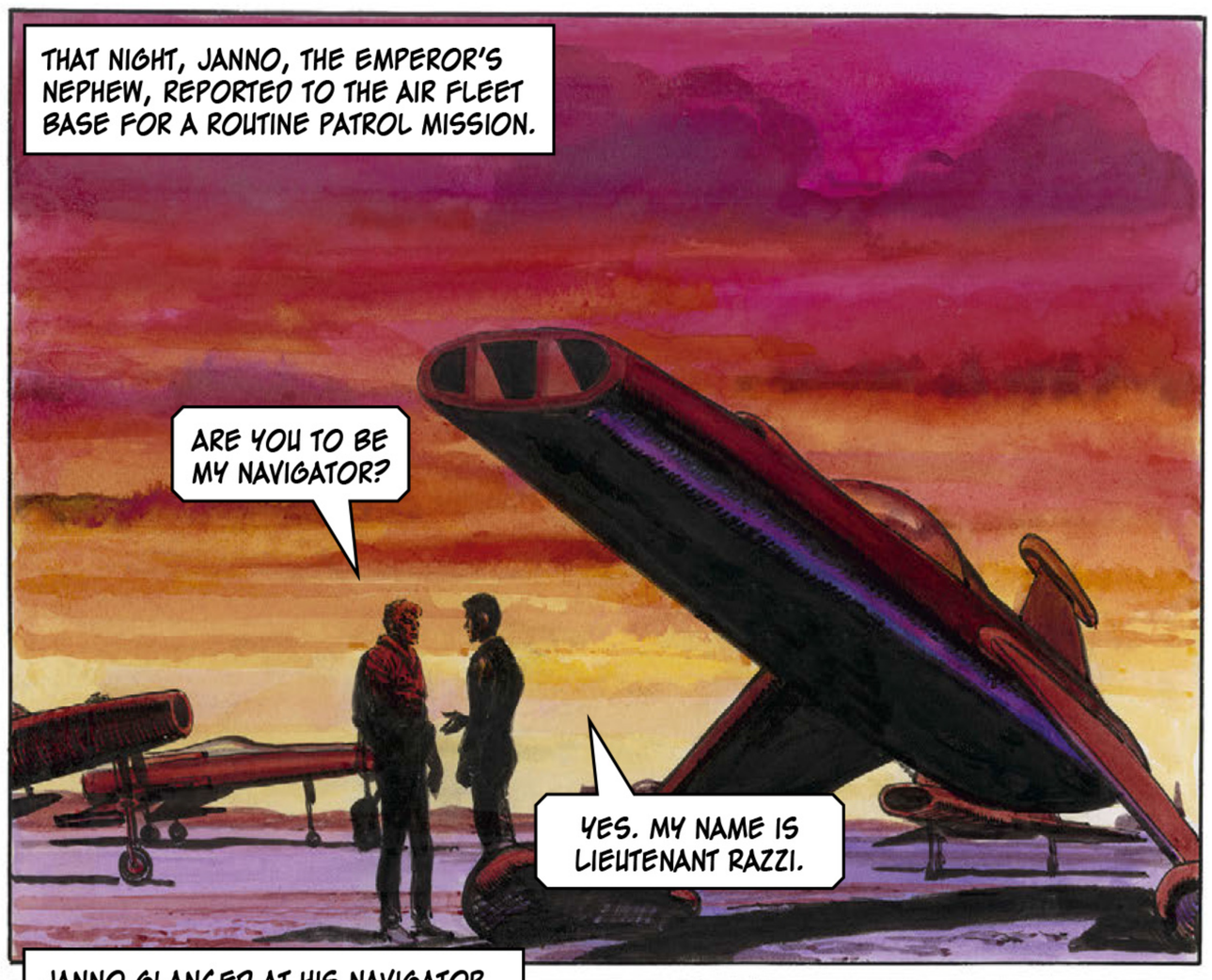

IN ALL TRIGAN CITY, NO ONE GUESSED THE SECRET THAT LAY HIDDEN IN THE MEAN HOVEL WHERE SHE LIVED.

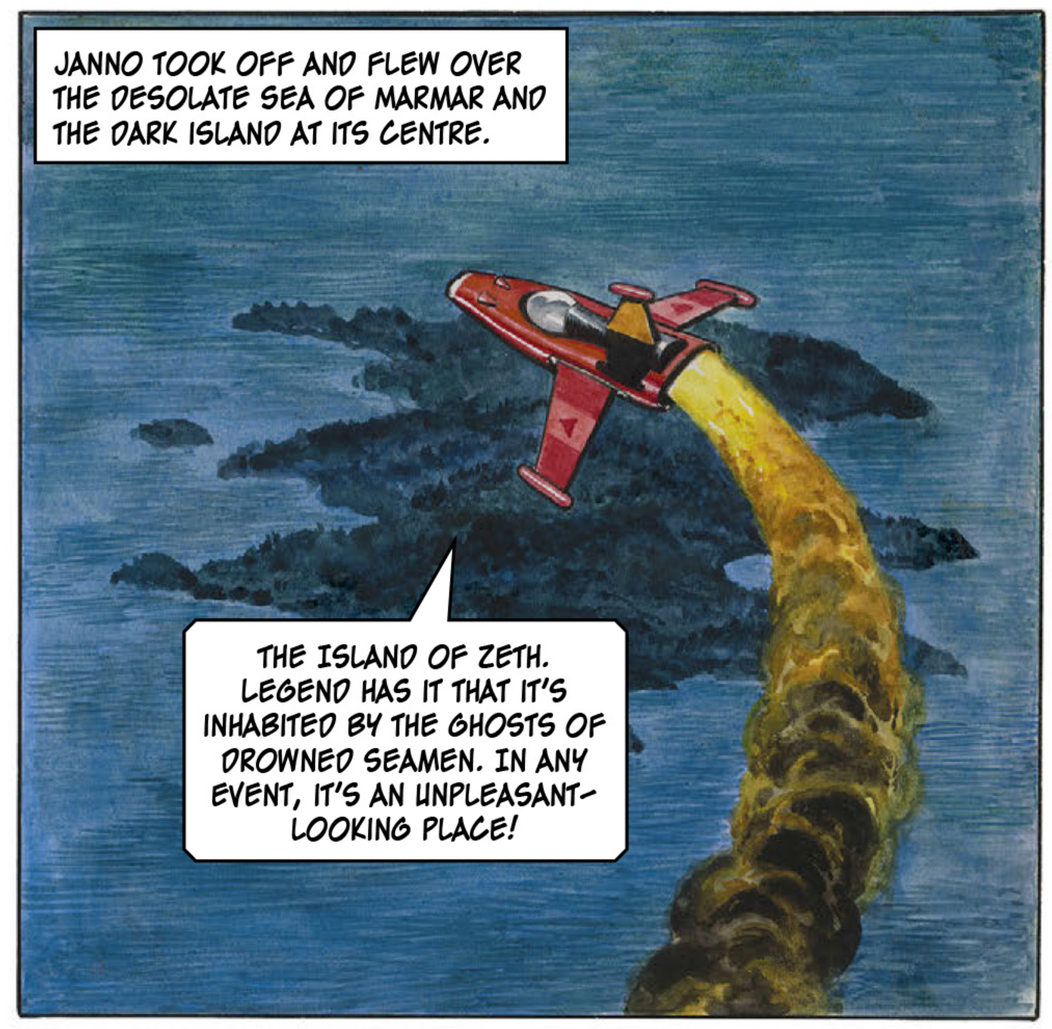
ONE SINGLE ROOM IN THAT HOVEL WAS FURNISHED WITH A SPLENDOUR THAT WOULD NOT HAVE SHAMED THE IMPERIAL PALACE. IT WAS THE ROOM OF... HER SON.
CONFOUND YOU, WOMAN! WHERE IS MY SUPPER?
YOUR PARDON, IMPERIAL HIGHNESS. IT IS NEARLY READY.

FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS, THE WIDOW HAD WORKED AND STOLEN TO BRING UP HER SON IN A MANNER BEFITTING THE HEIR TO THE IMPERIAL THRONE.
WHAT SUPERB ARROGANCE! MY WONDERFUL BOY!
WHEN I AM EMPEROR, I SHALL DEMAND STRICT PUNCTUALITY!

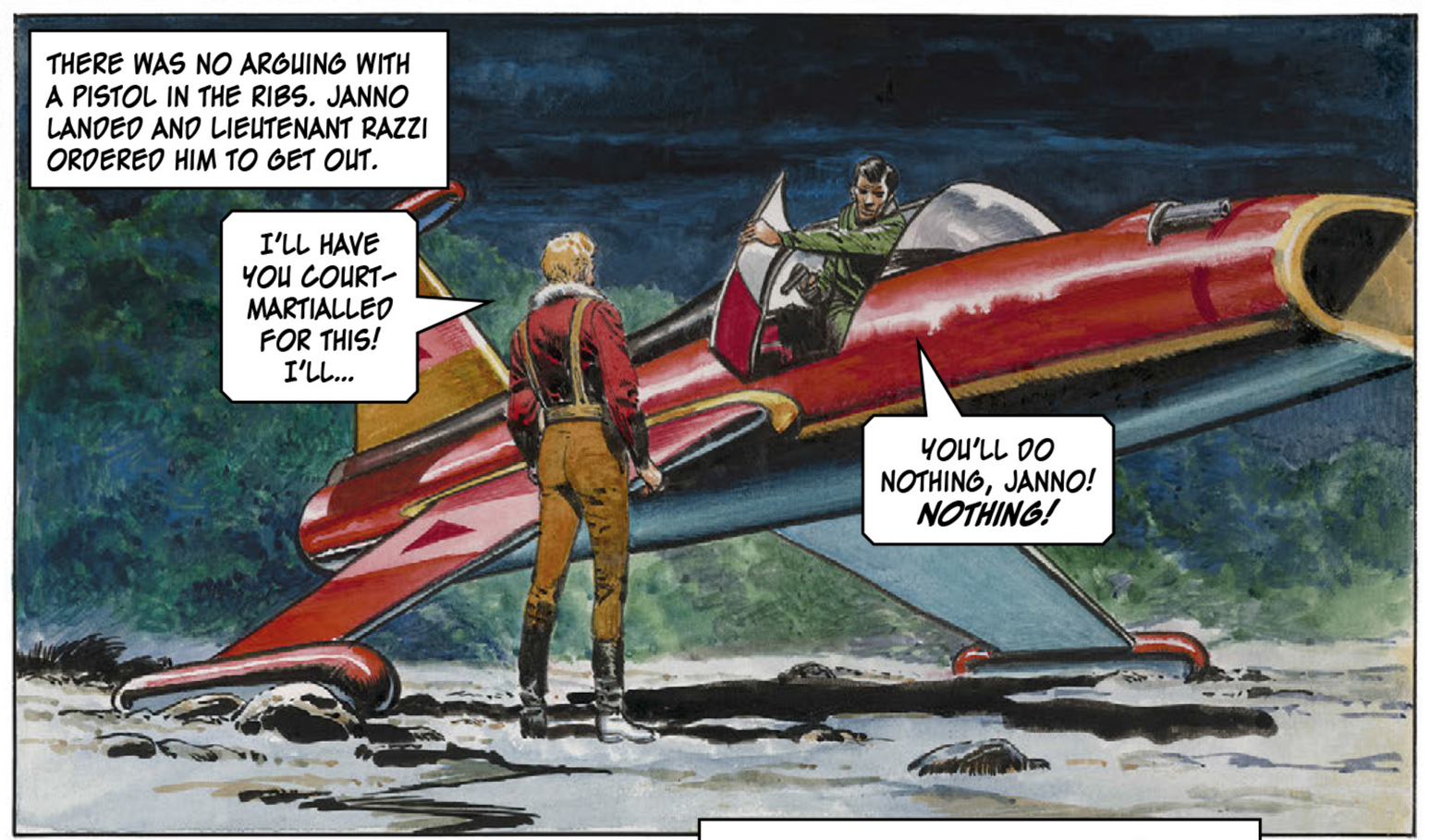
SOMETIMES HE GREW PENSIVE.
WHEN WILL THE GREAT DAY COME?
PATIENCE, MY SON! ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS WAIT!

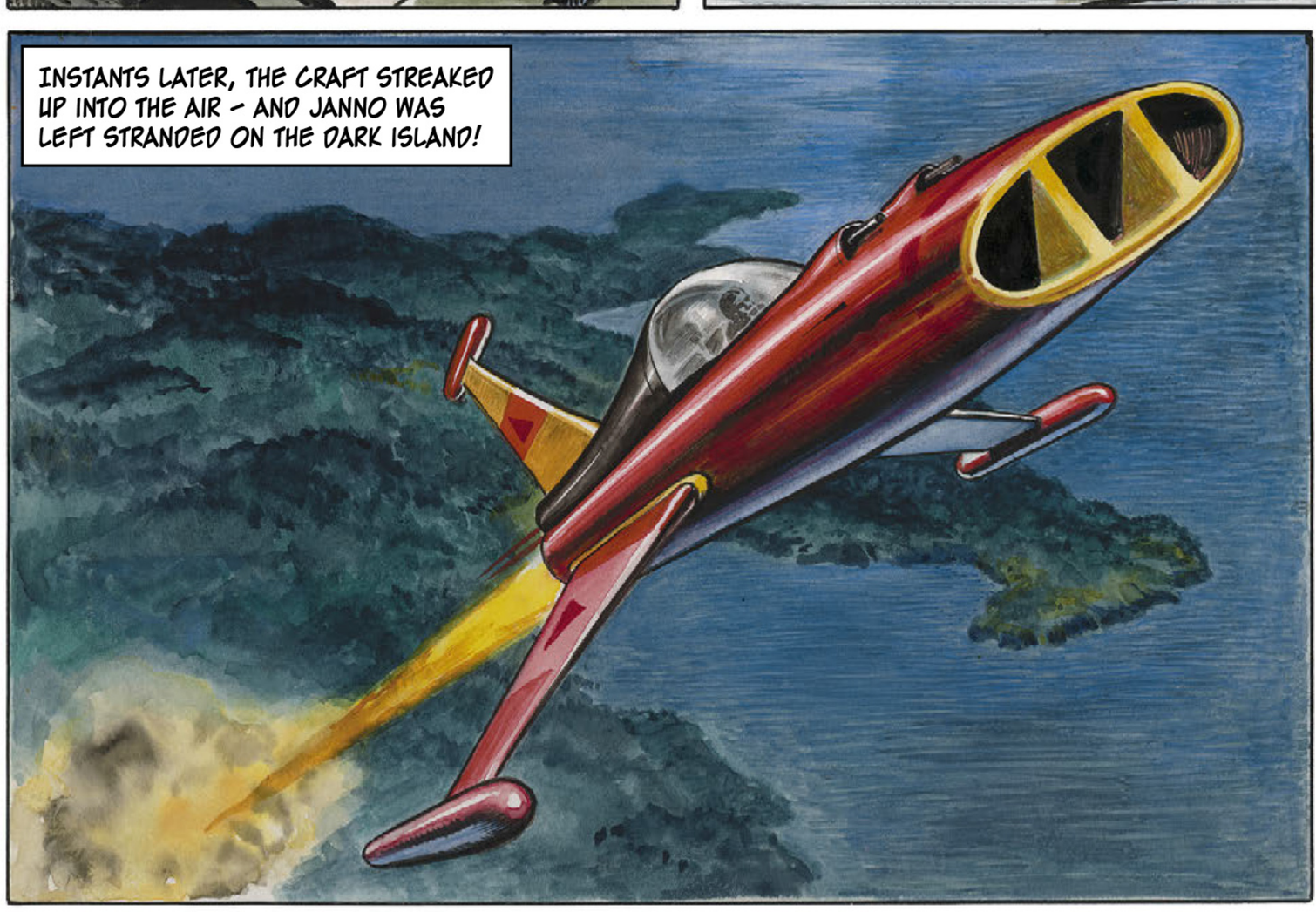
THERE WAS PANDEMONIUM IN THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL AS ANGRY MEMBERS SHOUTED TO MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD.
THE VERY IDEA IS MONSTROUS!
WE WON'T STAND FOR IT!
YOU ARE DESTROYING THE EMPIRE!
SILENCE! SILENCE, I SAY!
THERE WAS A MURMUR OF AGREEMENT FROM THE CIVILIAN MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL – BUT IT WAS DROWNED BY THE HOWLS OF PROTEST FROM THE LEADERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.
NO! WE ARE A FIGHTING RACE! WAR IS OUR LIFE!
THE EMPIRE IS AT PEACE AND LIKELY TO REMAIN SO. CONSEQUENTLY, I PROPOSE TO CUT THE ARMED FORCES AND USE THE MONEY TO BETTER THE LOT OF OUR POORER CITIZENS!
I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN SEE THE FLEET DISBANDED!
EMPEROR OR NO EMPEROR, WHAT YOU PROPOSE AMOUNTS TO TREASON!
TRIGO HAD THE LAST WORD.
IT WILL BE AS I ORDER!
AFTERWARDS, THE LEADERS OF THE TRIGAN FORCES HELD A SECRET MEETING, PRESIDED OVER BY THE FIREBRAND LEADER OF THE LAND TROOPS, MARSHAL ROCHA.
THIS MOVE IS DIRECTED AGAINST US!
WHAT'S TO BE DONE?
OF COURSE IT IS! WE WON TRIGO AN EMPIRE BUT NOW HE SEEKS TO DESTROY US IN CASE WE GET TOO POWERFUL!
THERE IS ONLY ONE THING FOR IT... TRIGO MUST GO!
A HUSHED SILENCE FOLLOWED MARSHAL ROCHA'S ASTOUNDING REMARK. THEN FOLLOWED A CHORUS OF RELUCTANT AGREEMENT.
DISPOSE OF TRIGO – YES! BUT WHO TO REIGN IN HIS PLACE?
NONE OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY, THAT'S FOR SURE. NEITHER BRAG NOR JANNO, NOR THE KING OF HERICON.
THEN WHO?
ROCHA MADE A GESTURE OF IMPATIENCE.
WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHO? WE'LL FIND SOME PETTY KING OF A MINOR STATE AND OFFER HIM THE IMPERIAL CROWN. AFTER ALL, WE ONLY WANT SOMEONE WHO LOOKS THE PART! AFTER WE'VE DISPOSED OF TRIGO, IT WILL BE WE WHO RULE THE EMPIRE!
THE CONSPIRACY GREW IN SECRECY, TILL NEARLY HALF THE ARMED FORCES WERE IN THE PLOT. PRESENTLY, THE TIME CAME TO STRIKE.
WE STRIKE TONIGHT! PASS IT ON!


THAT NIGHT, JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, REPORTED TO THE AIR FLEET BASE FOR A ROUTINE PATROL MISSION.
ARE YOU TO BE MY NAVIGATOR?
YES. MY NAME IS LIEUTENANT RAZZI.


JANNO TOOK OFF AND FLEW OVER THE DESOLATE SEA OF MARMAR AND THE DARK ISLAND AT ITS CENTRE.
THE ISLAND OF ZETH. LEGEND HAS IT THAT IT'S INHABITED BY THE GHOSTS OF DROWNED SEAMEN. IN ANY EVENT, IT'S AN UNPLEASANT-LOOKING PLACE!

JANNO GLANCED AT HIS NAVIGATOR... AND THEN GLANCED AGAIN!
LAND ON THE ISLAND!
WHAT?
YOU HEARD ME! LAND!

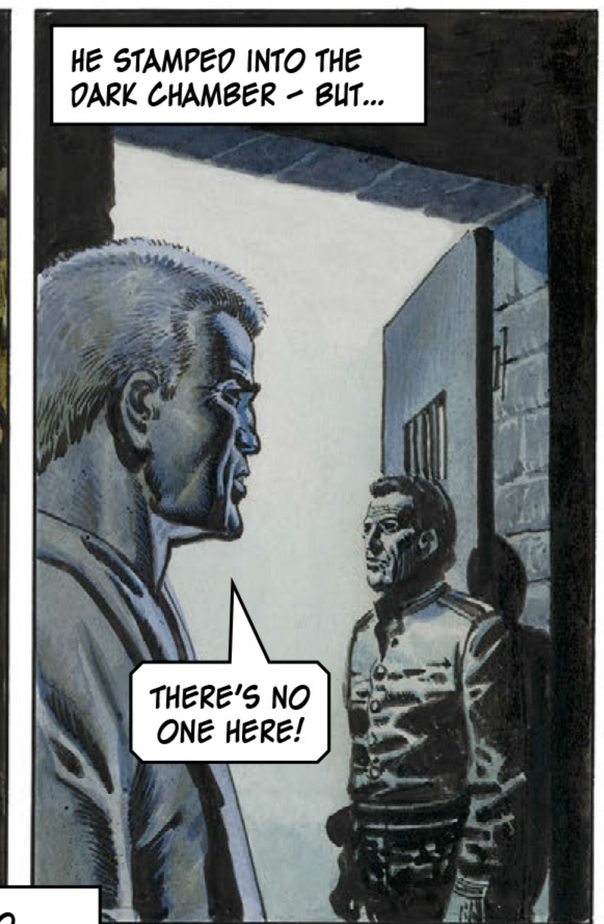

THERE WAS NO ARGUING WITH A PISTOL IN THE RIBS. JANNO LANDED AND LIEUTENANT RAZZI ORDERED HIM TO GET OUT.
I'LL HAVE YOU COURT-MARTIALLED FOR THIS! I'LL...
YOU'LL DO NOTHING, JANNO! NOTHING!


INSTANTS LATER, THE CRAFT STREAKED UP INTO THE AIR – AND JANNO WAS LEFT STRANDED ON THE DARK ISLAND!

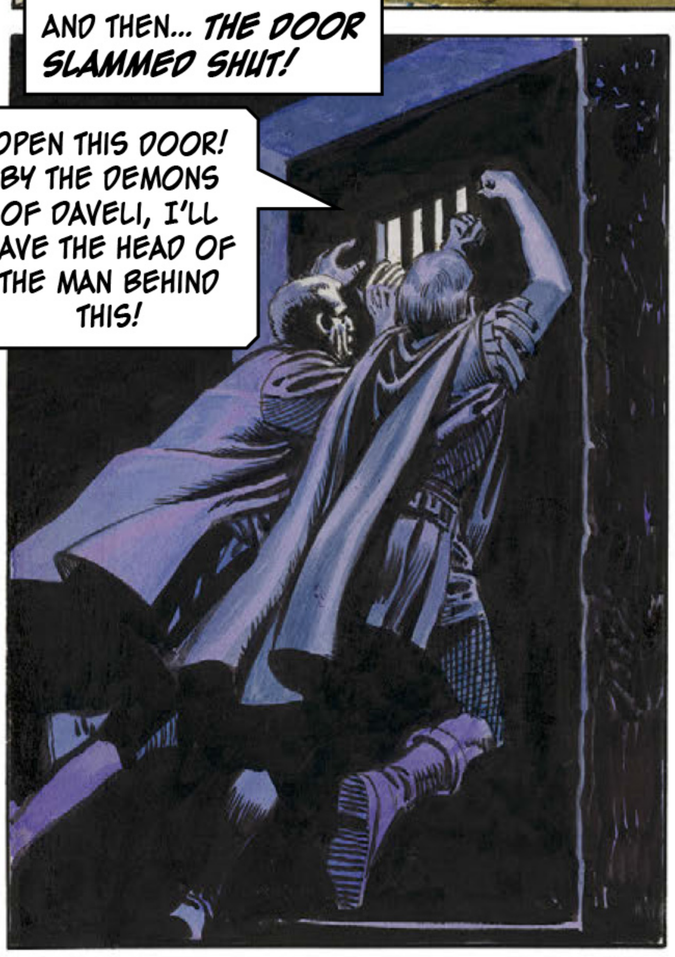
AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, JANNO'S FATHER, THE EMPEROR'S BROTHER, BRAG, WAS STARING IN ASTONISHMENT AT A NOTE WHICH HE HAD FOUND LYING ON HIS BED.
BY ALL THE STARS! WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

ON READING THE MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE HE HAD FOUND IN HIS BEDCHAMBER, BRAG STORMED DOWN TO THE DUNGEON BELOW THE IMPERIAL PALACE.
IT CAN'T BE TRUE! IT MUST BE SOME ILL-TIMED JEST!

HE HALTED BY THE DOOR OF THE DEEPEST DUNGEON AND BARKED TO THE GUARD.
I HAVE A NOTE THAT SAYS MY SON JANNO HAS BEEN ARRESTED AND THROWN IN HERE! OPEN UP AT ONCE!


HE STAMPED INTO THE DARK CHAMBER – BUT...
THERE'S NO ONE HERE!

AT THAT MOMENT, TRIGO ALSO ENTERED THE DUNGEON. THE TWO BROTHERS STARED AT EACH OTHER.
BRAG! I HAD THIS MESSAGE THAT YOU HAD BEEN ARRESTED!
BUT... I HAD A SIMILAR MESSAGE ABOUT JANNO!


AND THEN... THE DOOR SLAMMED SHUT!
OPEN THIS DOOR! BY THE DEMONS OF DAVELI, I'LL HAVE THE HEAD OF THE MAN BEHIND THIS!

BEYOND, AN OFFICER GAVE A TERRIBLE ORDER.
THE TWO NAMELESS PRISONERS WILL REMAIN IN THERE TILL THE END OF THEIR DAYS. NO ONE WILL SPEAK TO THEM ON PAIN OF DEATH! THEY WILL BE FED – SPARELY – WITH FOOD AND WATER ONCE A DAY. IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?
YES, CAPTAIN!

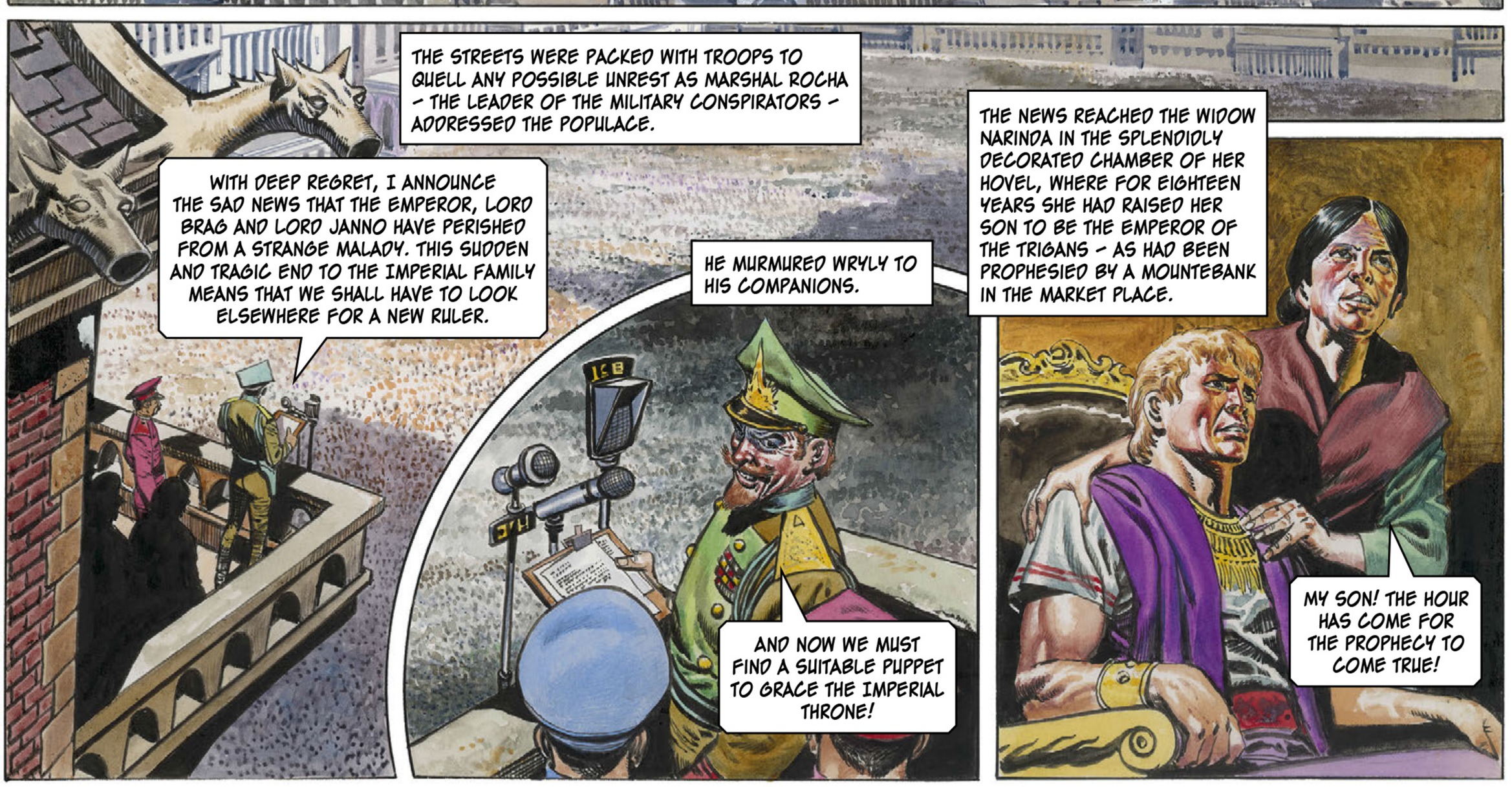
MEANWHILE, FAR AWAY ON THE ISLAND OF ZETH, IN THE SEA OF MARMAR WHERE HE HAD BEEN MAROONED, JANNO TOOK STOCK OF HIS SITUATION.
AT LEAST I SHALL NOT WANT FOR FRESH WATER. AND THE WOODS WILL BE TEEMING WITH GAME, I SHOULDN'T WONDER. WHATEVER HAPPENS, I'LL NOT STARVE!

BUT THEN...
EEEAAAAHH!

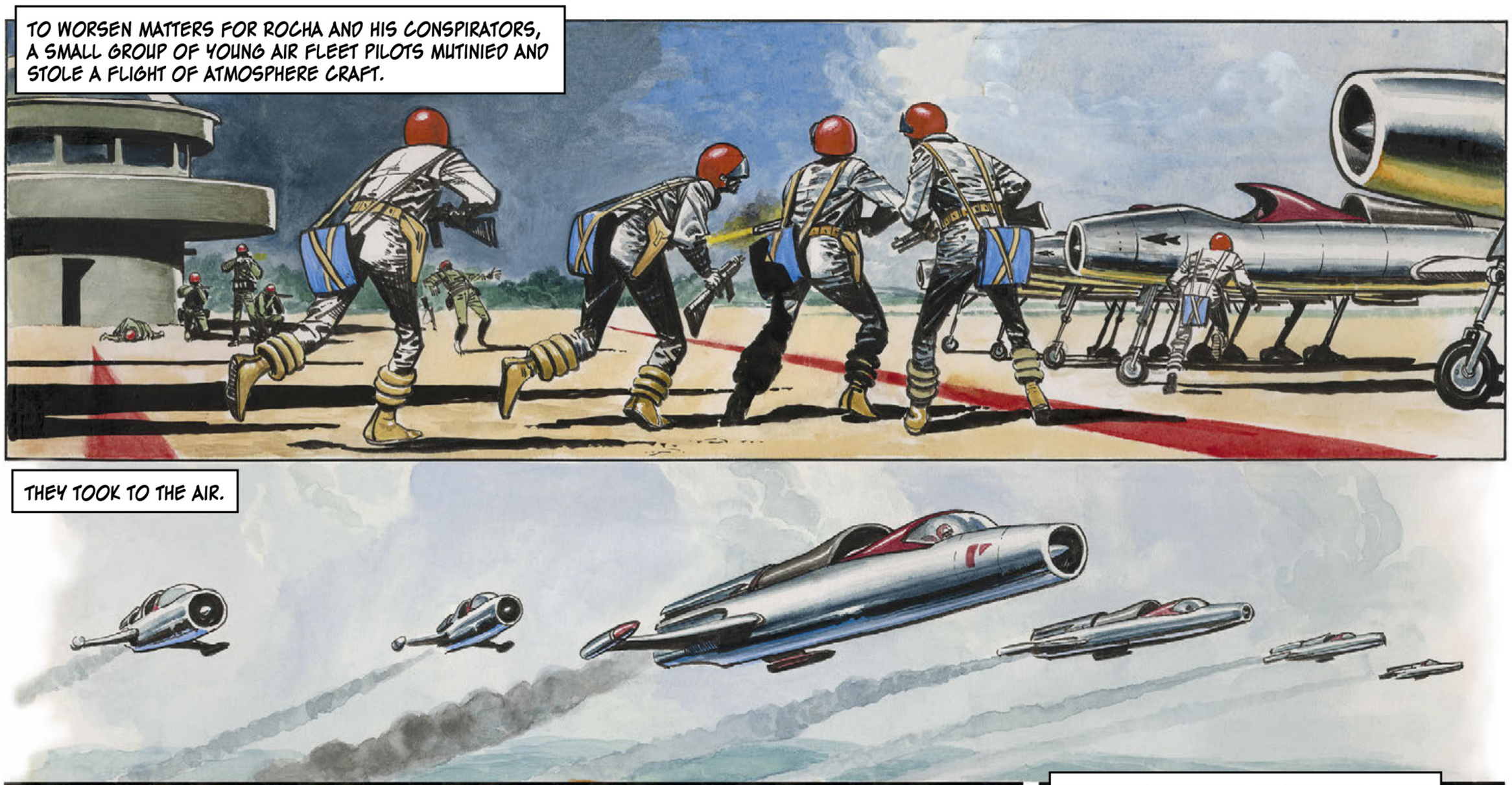
ABOVE HIM, ON A ROCKY LEDGE, STOOD A SEPULCHRAL FIGURE!
AH! NO!

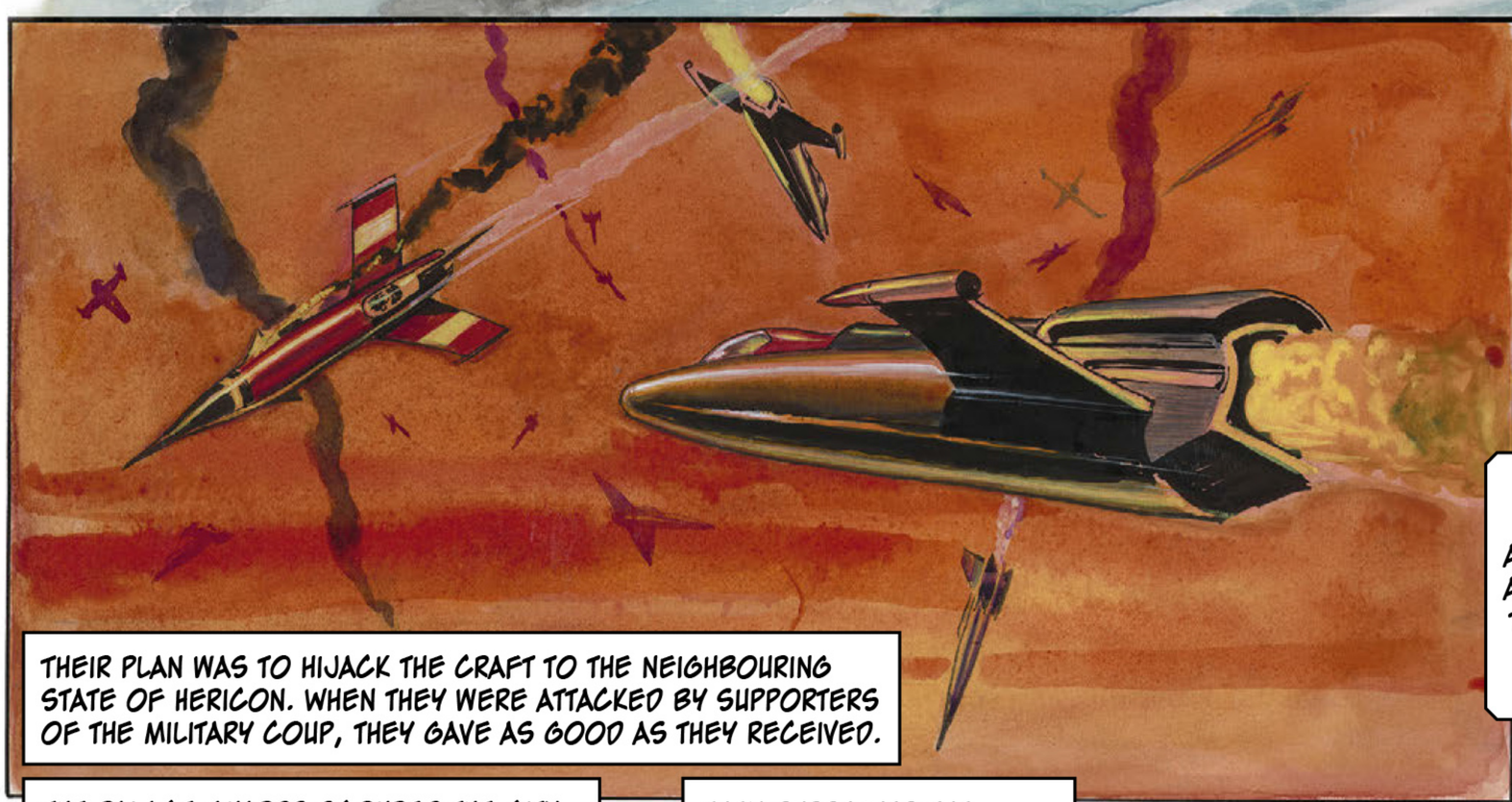
LEGEND HAD IT THAT THE ISLAND WAS HAUNTED BY THE GHOSTS OF DROWNED SEAMEN. JANNO – WHO WAS BRAVE AND SKILFUL IN BATTLE – WAS POSSESSED OF ALL THE SUPERSTITIONS OF HIS RACE... AND HE FLED IN PANIC!
AAAAAAHHHH!

THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE ENTIRE AIR FLEET OF THE EMPIRE FLEW LOW OVER THE CITY OF TRIGAN.


THE STREETS WERE PACKED WITH TROOPS TO QUELL ANY POSSIBLE UNREST AS MARSHAL ROCHA – THE LEADER OF THE MILITARY CONSPIRATORS – ADDRESSED THE POPULACE.
WITH DEEP REGRET, I ANNOUNCE THE SAD NEWS THAT THE EMPEROR, LORD BRAG AND LORD JANNO HAVE PERISHED FROM A STRANGE MALADY. THIS SUDDEN AND TRAGIC END TO THE IMPERIAL FAMILY MEANS THAT WE SHALL HAVE TO LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR A NEW RULER.
HE MURMURED WRYLY TO HIS COMPANIONS.
AND NOW WE MUST FIND A SUITABLE PUPPET TO GRACE THE IMPERIAL THRONE!
THE NEWS REACHED THE WIDOW NARINDA IN THE SPLENDIDLY DECORATED CHAMBER OF HER HOVEL, WHERE FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS SHE HAD RAISED HER SON TO BE THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS – AS HAD BEEN PROPHESIED BY A MOUNTEBANK IN THE MARKET PLACE.
MY SON! THE HOUR HAS COME FOR THE PROPHECY TO COME TRUE!

JANNO SPENT A LONG DAY OF SUSPENSE ON THE ISLAND WHERE HE HAD BEEN MAROONED. WITH THE APPROACH OF NIGHTFALL, THE SUPERSTITIOUS MIND OF THE YOUNG WARRIOR BEGAN TO CRACK.
WHAT TERRORS SHALL I SEE WHEN DARKNESS COMES? WILL MORE GHOSTS OF DROWNED SAILORS APPEAR?
NEXT MOMENT...
AAAAAAHHH!
FROM ALL SIDES THEY CAME AT HIM... THE SILENT, SEPULCHRAL WRAITHS!
SUDDENLY, JANNO TRIPPED IN HIS HEADLONG FLIGHT.
HE LAY THERE UNCONSCIOUS – AND THE STRANGE FIGURES CLOSED ABOUT HIM!
MEANWHILE, IN TRIGAN CITY, MARSHAL ROCHA, THE LEADER OF THE MILITARY COUP, WAS ANGRILY READING REPLIES HE HAD RECEIVED FROM VARIOUS RULERS OF SMALL STATES.
LISTEN TO THIS FROM THE KING OF GATH! "ALL THE RICHES OF ELEKTON WOULD NOT PERSUADE ME TO ACCEPT THE THRONE OF MY FRIEND THE EMPEROR TRIGO, WHOM – I AM CONVINCED – YOU HAVE FOULLY AND SECRETLY SLAIN."
WHAT'S TO BE DONE IF NO ONE WILL ACCEPT THE THRONE?
THE TRIGANS WILL ONLY OBEY THE EMPEROR.
THEN WE MUST CREATE ONE OURSELVES!


TO WORSEN MATTERS FOR ROCHA AND HIS CONSPIRATORS, A SMALL GROUP OF YOUNG AIR FLEET PILOTS MUTINIED AND STOLE A FLIGHT OF ATMOSPHERE CRAFT.
THEY TOOK TO THE AIR.

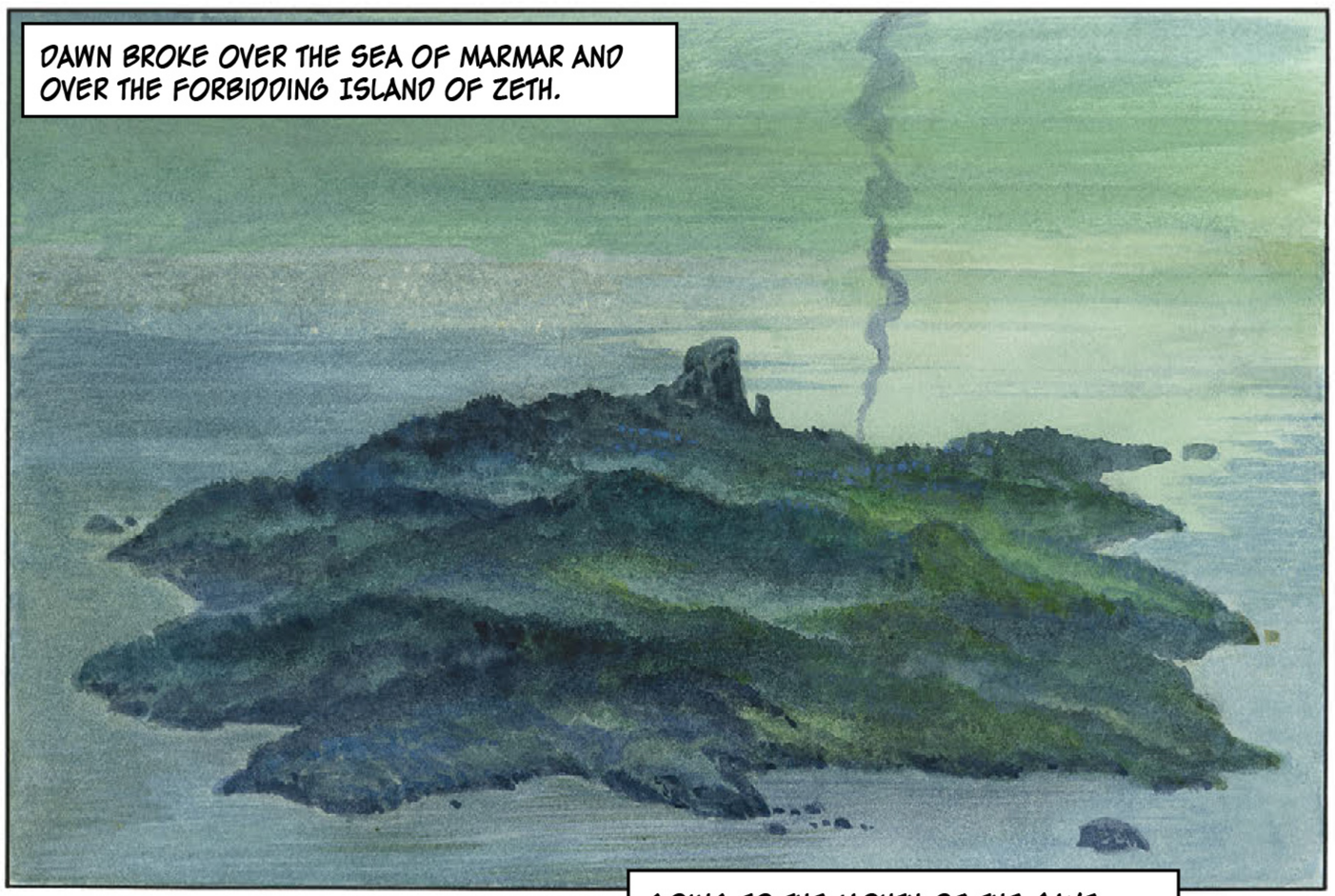

THEIR PLAN WAS TO HIJACK THE CRAFT TO THE NEIGHBOURING STATE OF HERICON. WHEN THEY WERE ATTACKED BY SUPPORTERS OF THE MILITARY COUP, THEY GAVE AS GOOD AS THEY RECEIVED.

ROCHA WAS FURIOUS. HE KNEW HE COULD NOT HOLD POWER FOR TOO LONG.
SEARCH THE CITY! ANYONE CARRYING ARMS, ANYONE WITH HIDDEN ARMS, ANYONE WHO LOOKS LIKE A TROUBLE-MAKER, IS TO BE ARRESTED AND EXECUTED WITHOUT TRIAL!

THE PALACE GUARDS SCOURED THE CITY... AND AT LENGTH THEY CAME TO THE HOVEL OF THE WIDOW NARINDA.
OPEN UP IN THE NAME OF THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT!
BREAK IT DOWN!

THEY BURST INTO THE INNER ROOM WHERE, FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS, BECAUSE OF A PROPHECY, NARINDA HAD RAISED HER SON AS A TRIGAN PRINCE.
BY ALL THE STARS!

THE WIDOW'S VOICE SPAT AT THEM LIKE A WHIPLASH!
ON YOUR KNEES, ANIMALS! ON YOUR KNEES BEFORE YOUR NEW EMPEROR!


DAWN BROKE OVER THE SEA OF MARMAR AND OVER THE FORBIDDING ISLAND OF ZETH.

AS JANNO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AND RAISED HIS THROBBING HEAD, THE SIGHT OF A SEPULCHRAL FIGURE BROUGHT A CRY OF ALARM TO HIS LIPS.
NO-O-O-O-O-O!

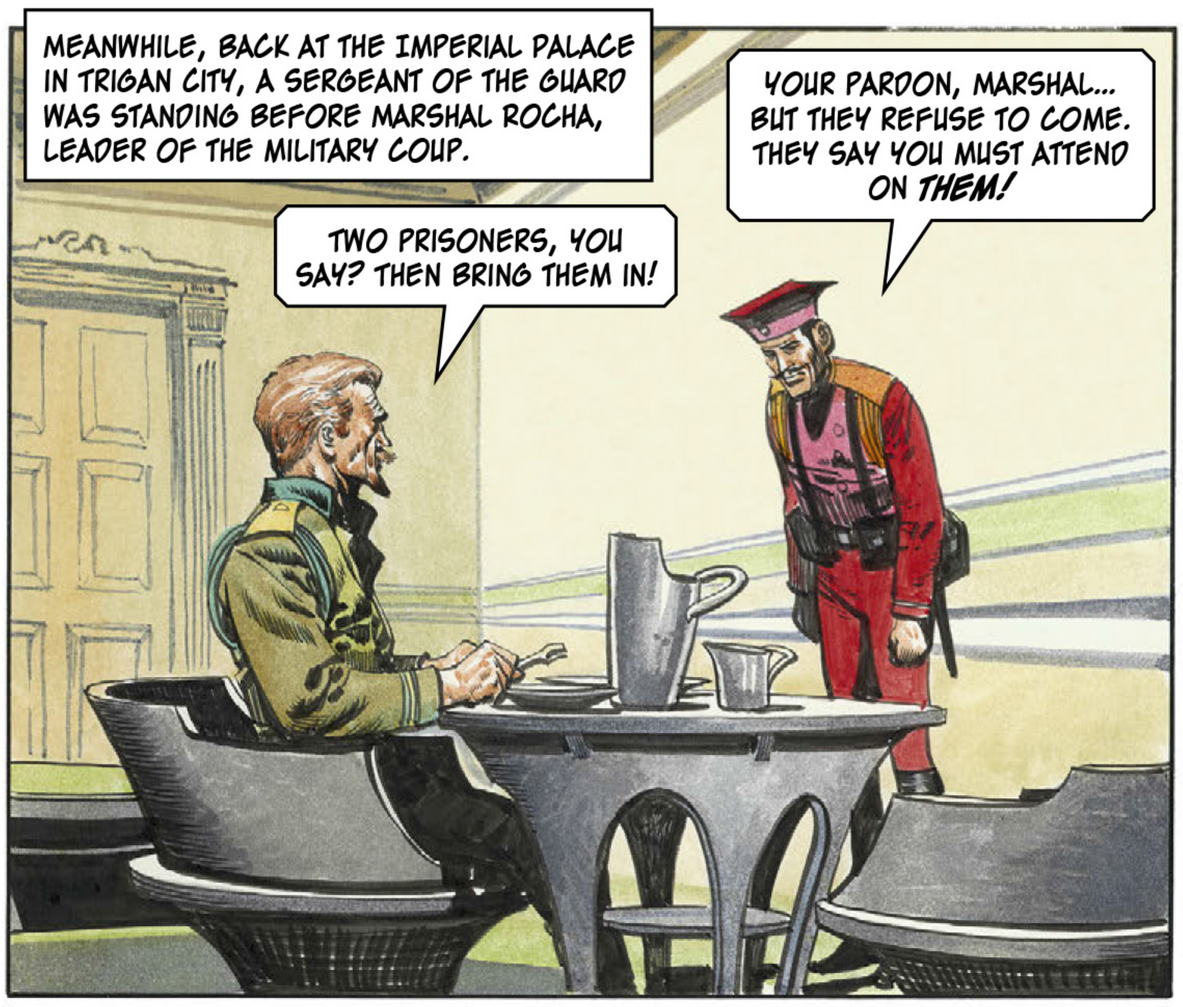
THE HOOD WAS DRAWN BACK... TO REVEAL A GRINNING FACE!
HEH! GAVE YOU QUITE A TURN DIDN'T WE, LAD?

GOING TO THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE, THE MAN BECKONED JANNO TO FOLLOW HIM. THE YOUNG TRIGAN SAW A GROUP OF FIGURES EATING ROUND A FIRE.
MEET THE HAPPY BAND! THEY DON'T LOOK QUITE SO TERRIFYING BY DAYLIGHT, DO THEY?
SO, HE'S RECOVERED, EH?

AND SO JANNO LEARNED THAT HE HAD BEEN TRICKED. THE ISLAND WAS NOT HAUNTED BY THE SPIRITS OF DEPARTED SAILORS.
BUT... WHO ARE YOU?
THE WORST BAND OF ROGUES AND CUT-THROATS ON ELEKTON, THAT'S US! ESCAPED CONVICTS, FUGITIVES FROM THE LAW... YOU'LL FIND ALL SORTS HERE!
WE LIVE HAPPY AND UNMOLESTED ON ZETH... AND THAT'S THE WAY WE MEAN TO KEEP IT!

THE GRINS VANISHED – AND JANNO WAS TAKEN IN A SAVAGE GRIP!
YOU CAME HERE IN AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT! ARE YOU A SPY? SPEAK!... OR I'LL BREAK EVERY BONE IN YOUR BODY!
I'M NO SPY! I CAN EXPLAIN.

HE TOLD HOW HE HAD BEEN MAROONED ON THE ISLAND... AND HIS EXPLANATION SEEMED TO SATISFY HIS CAPTOR.
YOU MAY BE TELLING THE TRUTH – BUT WE'LL STILL BE WATCHING YOU, MY LAD! AND IF THAT ATMOSPHERE CRAFT DOES COME BACK, I'LL CRUSH YOU WITH MY OWN HANDS! NOW GET YOURSELF SOME FOOD.


MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE IN TRIGAN CITY, A SERGEANT OF THE GUARD WAS STANDING BEFORE MARSHAL ROCHA, LEADER OF THE MILITARY COUP.
TWO PRISONERS, YOU SAY? THEN BRING THEM IN!
YOUR PARDON, MARSHAL... BUT THEY REFUSE TO COME. THEY SAY YOU MUST ATTEND ON THEM!

ANGRY AND PUZZLED, ROCHA FOLLOWED THE SERGEANT TO THE NEXT ROOM.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? HAS EVERYONE TAKEN LEAVE OF THEIR SENSES THIS MORNING? WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?
BEGGING YOUR PARDON, MARSHAL, BUT THE WOMAN SAYS...

MARSHAL ROCHA DROPPED INTO A CHAIR TO HEAR THE SERGEANT'S EXPLANATION...
ANIMAL! HOW DARE YOU SIT IN THE PRESENCE OF YOUR RIGHTFUL EMPEROR?

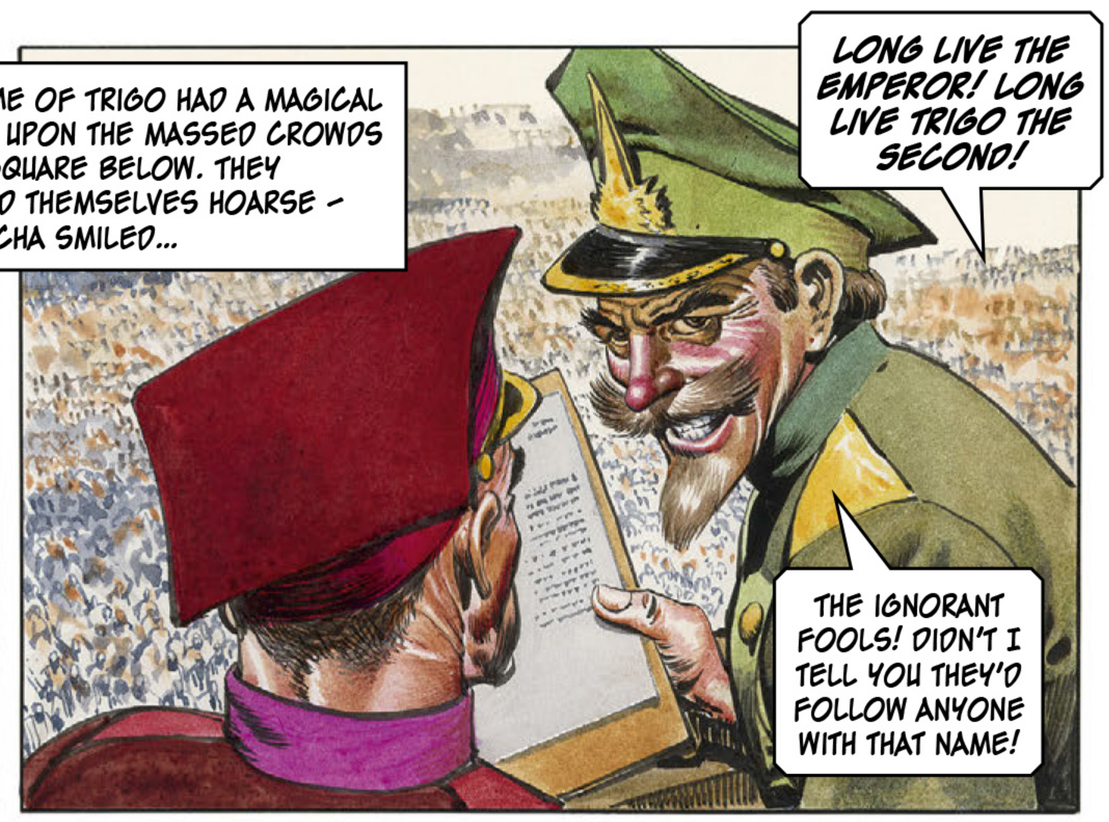
SOON AFTER THAT, THE MARSHAL SENT FOR WISE OLD PERIC, WHO HAD BEEN TRIGO'S FRIEND AND COUNSELLOR.
THIS LAD – THE ONE WHOSE MOTHER BROUGHT HIM UP TO BE THE EMPEROR... I WANT YOU TO EXAMINE HIM, TAKE HIS MIND APART AND SEE WHAT HE'S MADE OF. AT ONCE!

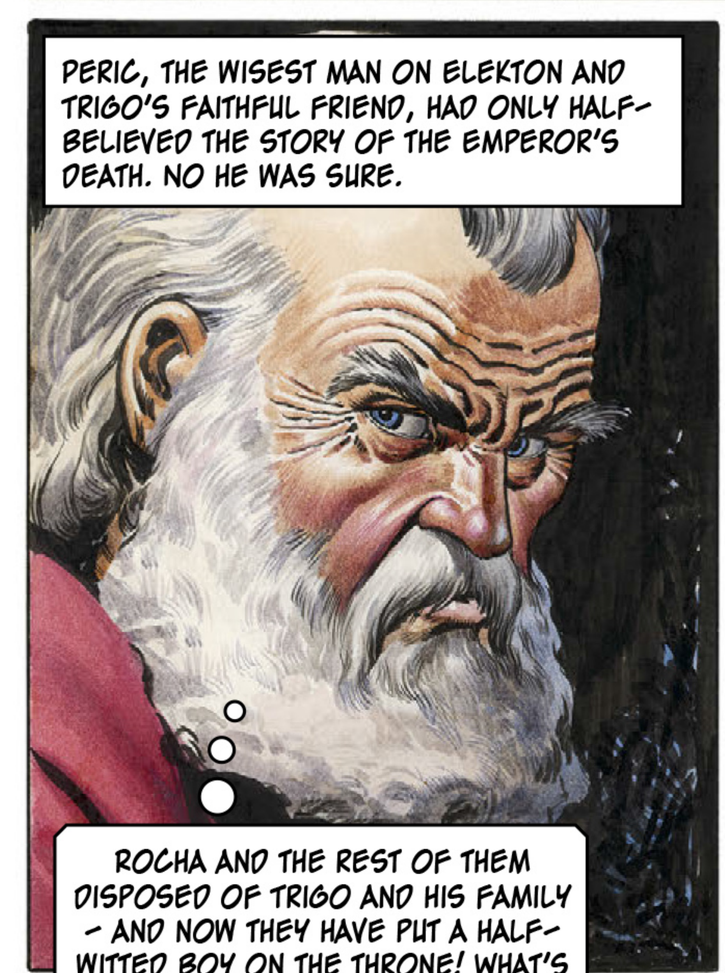
AND SO, FOR THREE DAYS, PERIC SUBMITTED THE STRANGE BOY TO A VARIETY OF MENTAL TESTS.

AND THEN HE REPORTED BACK TO ROCHA.
THE BOY HAS BEEN CONDITIONED BY HIS MOTHER TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT HE IS TO BE THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS. HE IS ARROGANT, SELF-CENTRED AND VAIN BEYOND BELIEF. BUT HE HAS HARDLY THE INTELLIGENCE OF A CHILD!

MARSHAL ROCHA SMILED GLEEFULLY.
FATE HAS SENT JUST THE CREATURE I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR! HE SHALL BE EMPEROR!
AND SO AN EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD PROPHECY CAME TRUE AND THE SON OF WIDOW NARINDA BECAME THE EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS!

THE PROCLAMATION WAS MADE THAT VERY DAY, FROM THE WALLS OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE OF TRIGAN CITY BY MARSHAL ROCHA.
FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF OUR LATE AND BELOVED EMPEROR TRIGO, THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT PROCLAIM HIS SUCCESSOR – WHO WILL SHORTLY BE CROWNED EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS AND TAKE THE NAME OF TRIGO THE SECOND!


THE NAME OF TRIGO HAD A MAGICAL EFFECT UPON THE MASSED CROWDS IN THE SQUARE BELOW. THEY CHEERED THEMSELVES HOARSE – AND ROCHA SMILED...
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR! LONG LIVE TRIGO THE SECOND!
THE IGNORANT FOOLS! DIDN'T I TELL YOU THEY'D FOLLOW ANYONE WITH THAT NAME!

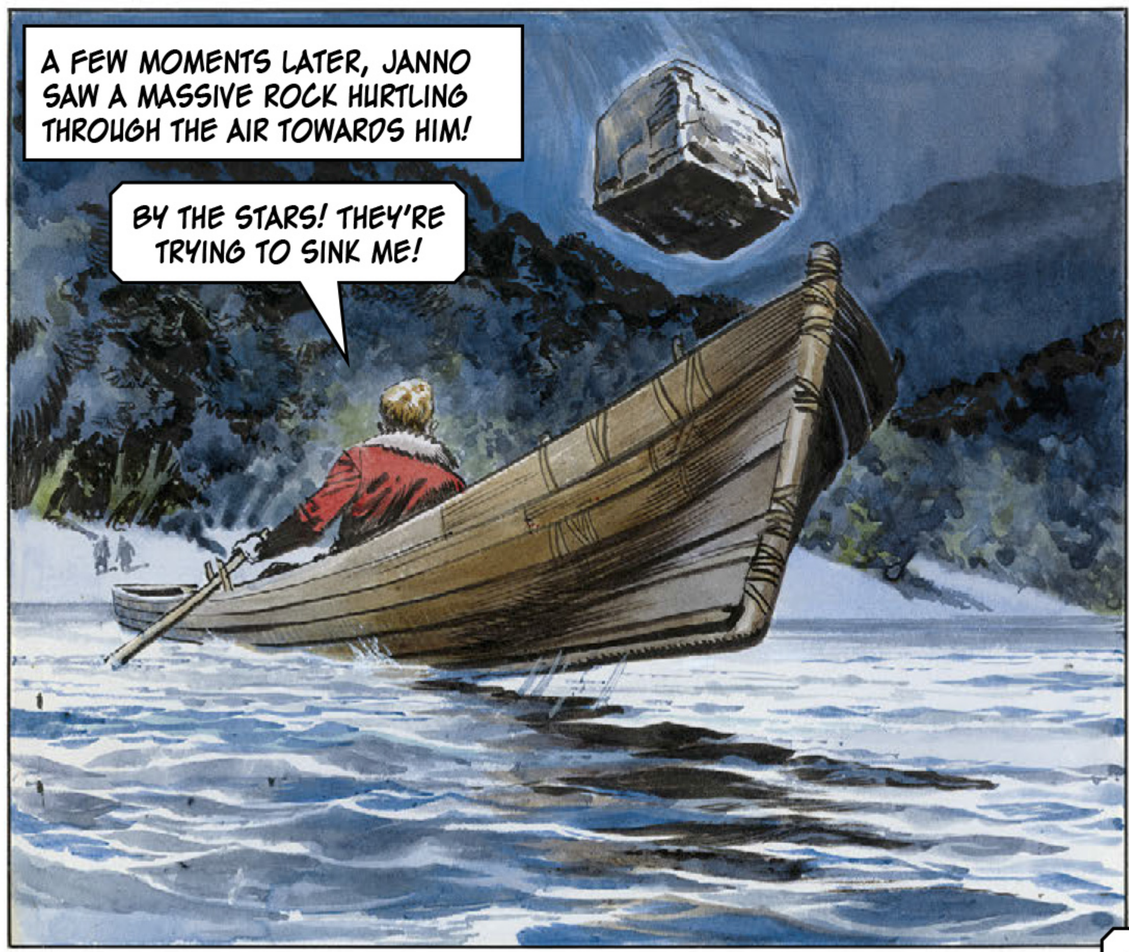

PERIC, THE WISEST MAN ON ELEKTON AND TRIGO'S FAITHFUL FRIEND, HAD ONLY HALF-BELIEVED THE STORY OF THE EMPEROR'S DEATH. NO HE WAS SURE.
ROCHA AND THE REST OF THEM DISPOSED OF TRIGO AND HIS FAMILY – AND NOW THEY HAVE PUT A HALF-WITTED BOY ON THE THRONE! WHAT'S TO BECOME OF THE EMPIRE?

THE CORONATION OF TRIGO II WAS HERALDED BY A MASSIVE AIR AND MILITARY DISPLAY.

AT THE SOLEMN CEREMONY OF CORONATION IN THE GREAT HALL OF THE PALACE, EVERYONE COMMENTED THAT THE BOY-EMPEROR LOOKED EVERY INCH A BORN RULER.
I SWEAR TO DEFEND THE EMPIRE WITH MY SWORD AND WITH MY LIFE!
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR! SALUTE TRIGO THE SECOND!

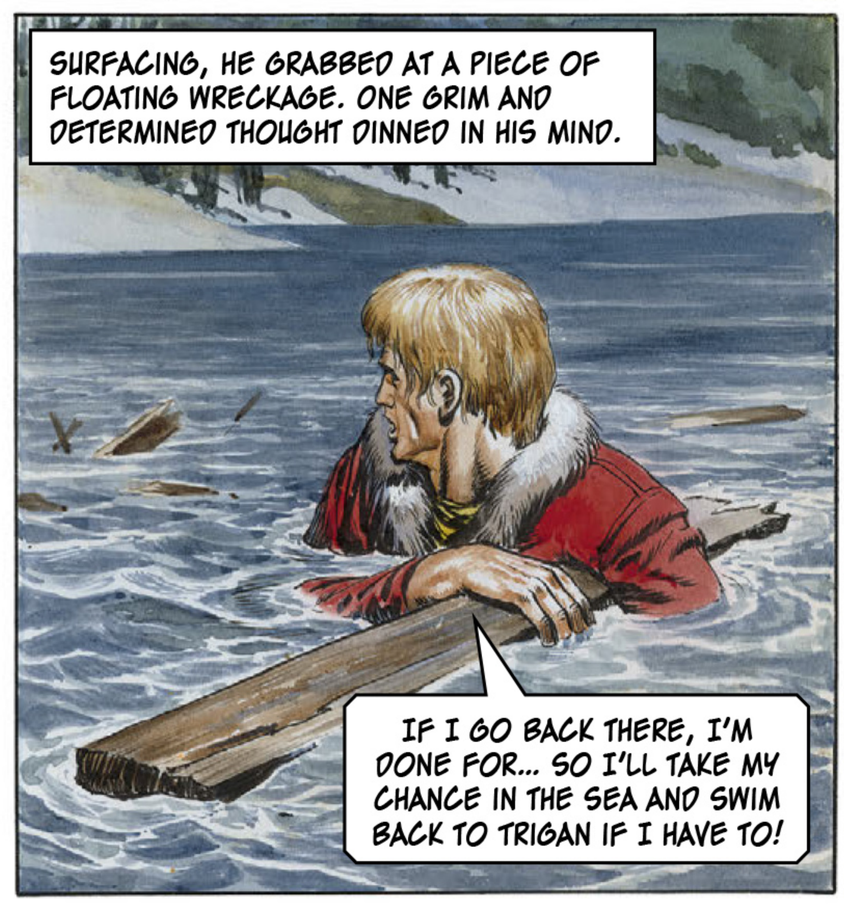
THE FARCE OF THE CROWNING OVER, MARSHAL ROCHA WASTED NO TIME IN GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS.
A FEW PAPERS FOR YOU TO SIGN... ER... IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
WHAT PAPERS ARE THESE, MARSHAL?

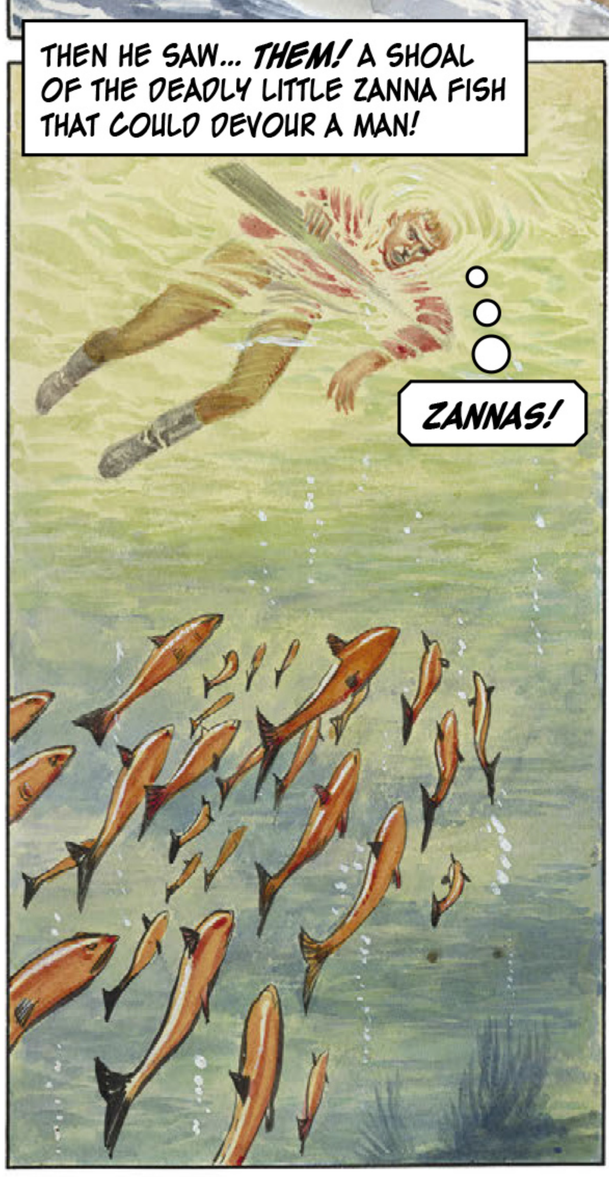
ROCHA GLARED AT NARINDA, THE EMPEROR'S MOTHER.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION, MADAME, THEY ARE ORDERS TO DOUBLE THE SIZE OF THE ARMED FORCES. NOW, WITH YOUR PERMISSION, HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY WILL...
NO!
SUDDENLY, ROCHA REALISED THAT – EVEN IF THE BOY-EMPEROR WAS A PUPPET – HIS MOTHER WAS NO SUCH THING!
MY SON SHOULD DO WHAT TRIGO THE FIRST PLANNED TO DO – REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE ARMED FORCES AND USE THE MONEY TO BENEFIT THE POOR AND NEEDY OF THE EMPIRE!
IS THAT SO?
AND NARINDA REALISED THAT SHE WAS DEALING WITH A MAN WHO WOULD STOP AT NOTHING TO GAIN HIS OWN ENDS!
YOUR PRECIOUS SON, MADAME, WILL DO EXACTLY AS HE IS ORDERED – UNLESS HE WANTS TO BE THE LATE EMPEROR!
MEANWHILE, ON THE REMOTE ISLAND OF ZETH WHERE HE HAD BEEN MAROONED, TRIGO'S NEPHEW, JANNO, PASSED HIS DAYS IN PEACE AND IDLENESS WITH HIS COMPANIONS – A BAND OF ROGUES AND ESCAPED CONVICTS.
THIS IS THE LIFE, EH, JANNO?
YES, ERRID!
HE HAD NOT CONFIDED TO HIS NEW FRIENDS WHO HE WAS OR WHY HE HAD BEEN MAROONED.
AND SO – IN GREAT SECRECY – JANNO BEGAN TO BUILD A BOAT.
I MUST ESCAPE – I MUST! BUT IF THEY THOUGHT I WAS TRYING TO GET AWAY AND TELL OF THEIR ISLAND HIDEOUT, THEY'D SURELY KILL ME!
IN FACT, I'LL NEVER BETRAY THEM. THEY'RE NOT A BAD LOT AT HEART AND THEY'RE DOING NO HARM TO ANYONE HERE.
ELEKTON'S MOONS WAXED AND WANED FOUR TIMES BEFORE THE BOAT WAS FINISHED. ONE DARK NIGHT, JANNO DRAGGED THE BOAT DOWN TO THE WATER'S EDGE...
IF MY LUCK HOLDS AND THE MOONS STAY BEHIND THE CLOUDS, I'LL BE FAR AWAY BY DAWN!
BUT WHEN HE WAS A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE SHORE, THE MOONS CAME OUT – AND HE WAS REVEALED!
THERE'S A BOAT LEAVING THE ISLAND! STOP IT – AT ALL COSTS!


A FEW MOMENTS LATER, JANNO SAW A MASSIVE ROCK HURTLING THROUGH THE AIR TOWARDS HIM!
BY THE STARS! THEY'RE TRYING TO SINK ME!

THE CUT-THROAT BAND HAD A WEAPON FOR JUST SUCH AN EMERGENCY. THEIR FIRST PROJECTILE MISSED – AND THEY LAUNCHED THE SECOND.
THAT WILL SETTLE THE TREACHEROUS YOUNG ANIMAL!

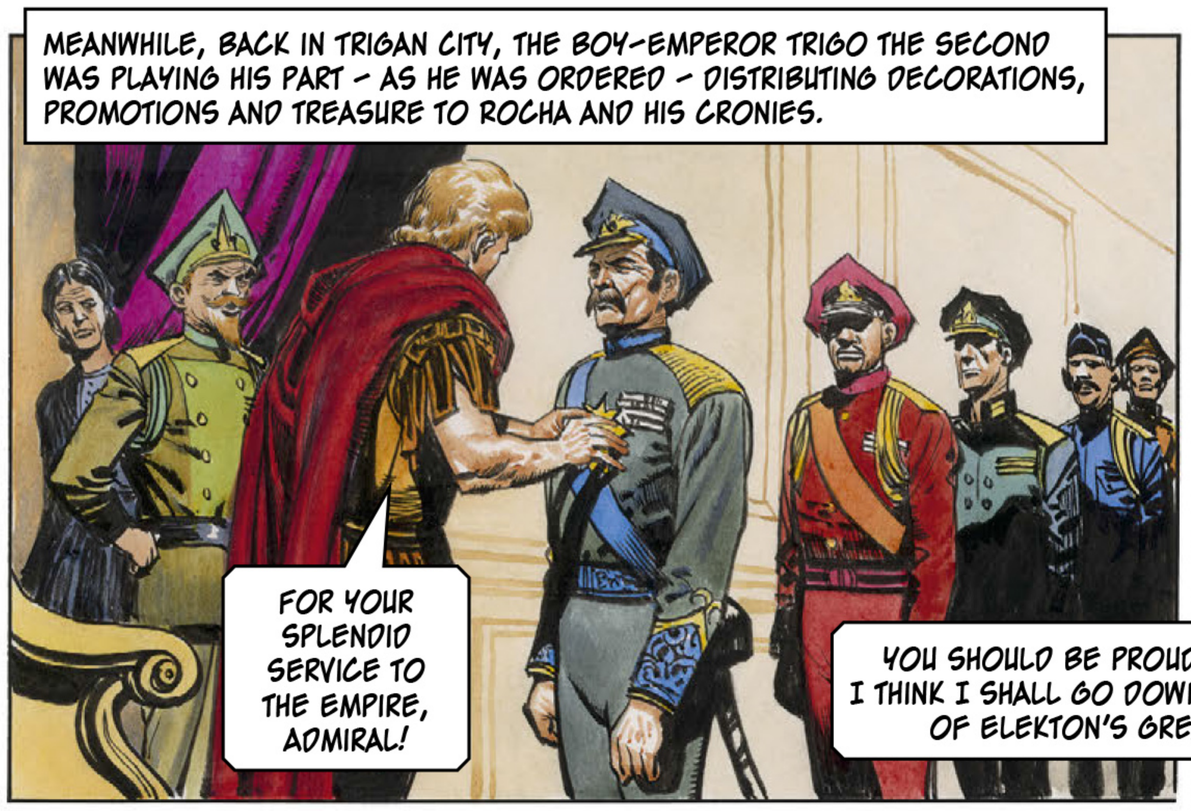
AAAAAAAH!
THE DESCENDING ROCK SMASHED JANNO'S FRAIL CRAFT TO PIECES!


SURFACING, HE GRABBED AT A PIECE OF FLOATING WRECKAGE. ONE GRIM AND DETERMINED THOUGHT DINNED IN HIS MIND.
IF I GO BACK THERE, I'M DONE FOR... SO I'LL TAKE MY CHANCE IN THE SEA AND SWIM BACK TO TRIGAN IF I HAVE TO!


THEN HE SAW... THEM! A SHOAL OF THE DEADLY LITTLE ZANNA FISH THAT COULD DEVOUR A MAN!
ZANNAS!

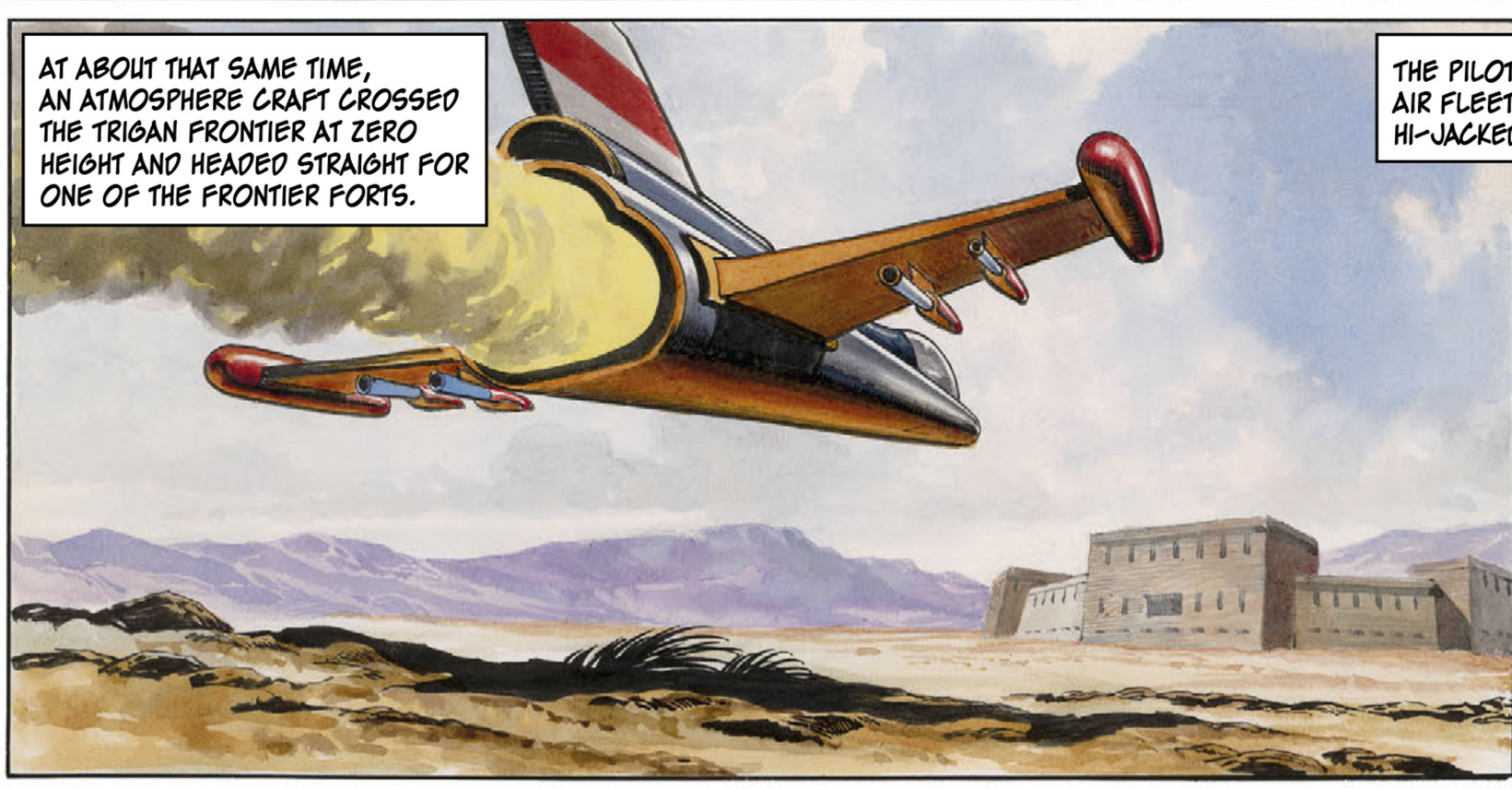
HE STRUCK OUT FOR THE SHORE AND REACHED IT WITH INSTANTS TO SPARE... JUST AS TINY TEETH WERE TREARING SCARLET FURROWS ON HIS LEGS!
AAAAAGH!

THEN... HE WAS SURROUNDED!
YOU KNOW OUR LAW! ALL WHO ATTEMPT TO LEAVE THE ISLAND MUST PERISH!


MEANWHILE, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE BOY-EMPEROR TRIGO THE SECOND WAS PLAYING HIS PART – AS HE WAS ORDERED – DISTRIBUTING DECORATIONS, PROMOTIONS AND TREASURE TO ROCHA AND HIS CRONIES.
FOR YOUR SPLENDID SERVICE TO THE EMPIRE, ADMIRAL!
YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF ME, MOTHER. I THINK I SHALL GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS ONE OF ELEKTON'S GREATEST RULERS.

TRIGO THE SECOND WAS ENJOYING HIS ROLE AND SAID AS MUCH TO HIS MOTHER.
OH, MY SON! MY POOR, SIMPLE-MINDED LAD! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT IT'S ROCHA WHO RULES THE TRIGAN EMPIRE?

A TERRIBLE DETERMINATION WAS BORN IN NARINDA'S MIND.
THEY HAVE MADE HIM A PUPPET – BUT MY SON MUST BE MORE THAN THAT! HE MUST BE THE TRUE EMPEROR – EVEN IF IT COSTS HIM HIS LIFE!


AT ABOUT THAT SAME TIME, AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT CROSSED THE TRIGAN FRONTIER AT ZERO HEIGHT AND HEADED STRAIGHT FOR ONE OF THE FRONTIER FORTS.

THE PILOT WAS ONE OF THOSE MEMBERS OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET WHO HAD MUTINIED AGAINST ROCHA AND HI-JACKED THEIR CRAFT TO HERICON. HIS NAME WAS DANNO.
NOW! TO STRIKE A BLOW FOR LIBERTY AND THE EMPIRE!

DANNO'S PROJECTILES SLAMMED INTO THE FORT!

AND THEN, AN UNLUCKY HIT – AND DISASTER!
THEY'VE GOT ME!

DANNO HAD A SPLIT INSTANT OF TIME TO EJECT BEFORE HIS CRAFT DIVED LIKE A FIREBALL INTO THE GROUND. TRIGAN SOLDIERS WERE WAITING FOR HIM.

DO WE SHOOT HIM?

NO! TAKE HIM ALIVE!

DANNO WAS ROUGHLY SEIZED.

HE WILL BE SENT TO TRIGAN CITY IMMEDIATELY. MARSHAL ROCHA HIMSELF WILL WANT TO PRONOUNCE JUSTICE ON THIS ACCURSED TRAITOR!

MEANWHILE, ON THE REMOTE ISLAND OF ZETH, WHERE HE HAD BEEN MAROONED AND FROM WHICH HE HAD TRIED TO ESCAPE, JANNO WAS FACING THE "ROUGH JUSTICE" OF THE BAND OF ROGUES AND ESCAPED CONVICTS WHO LIVED ON THE ISLAND.

WE ACCEPTED HIM AS ONE OF US AND HE REPAID OUR TRUST BY TRYING TO GET AWAY IN ORDER TO BETRAY US!

HE SHALL DIE!

THERE IS ONLY ONE PUNISHMENT FOR THAT!

THEY KNEW HIM BY NAME – BUT JANNO WAS A COMMON NAME ON ELEKTON AND HE HAD NEVER REVEALED WHO HE REALLY WAS... UNTIL NOW!

I AM LORD JANNO, NEPHEW OF THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS! WOULD I STOOP TO BETRAY A PACK OF CUT-THROATS?

TRIGO'S NEPHEW?

JANNO UNFASTENED HIS TUNIC TO SHOW THE MEDALLION THAT WAS PROOF OF HIS IMPERIAL BLOOD.

SEE?

LORD JANNO! FORGIVE ME. BEFORE I TOOK TO THE LIFE OF CRIME, I SERVED AS A SERGEANT IN THE TRIGAN IMPERIAL GUARDS!

THEN AN IDEA CAME TO JANNO.

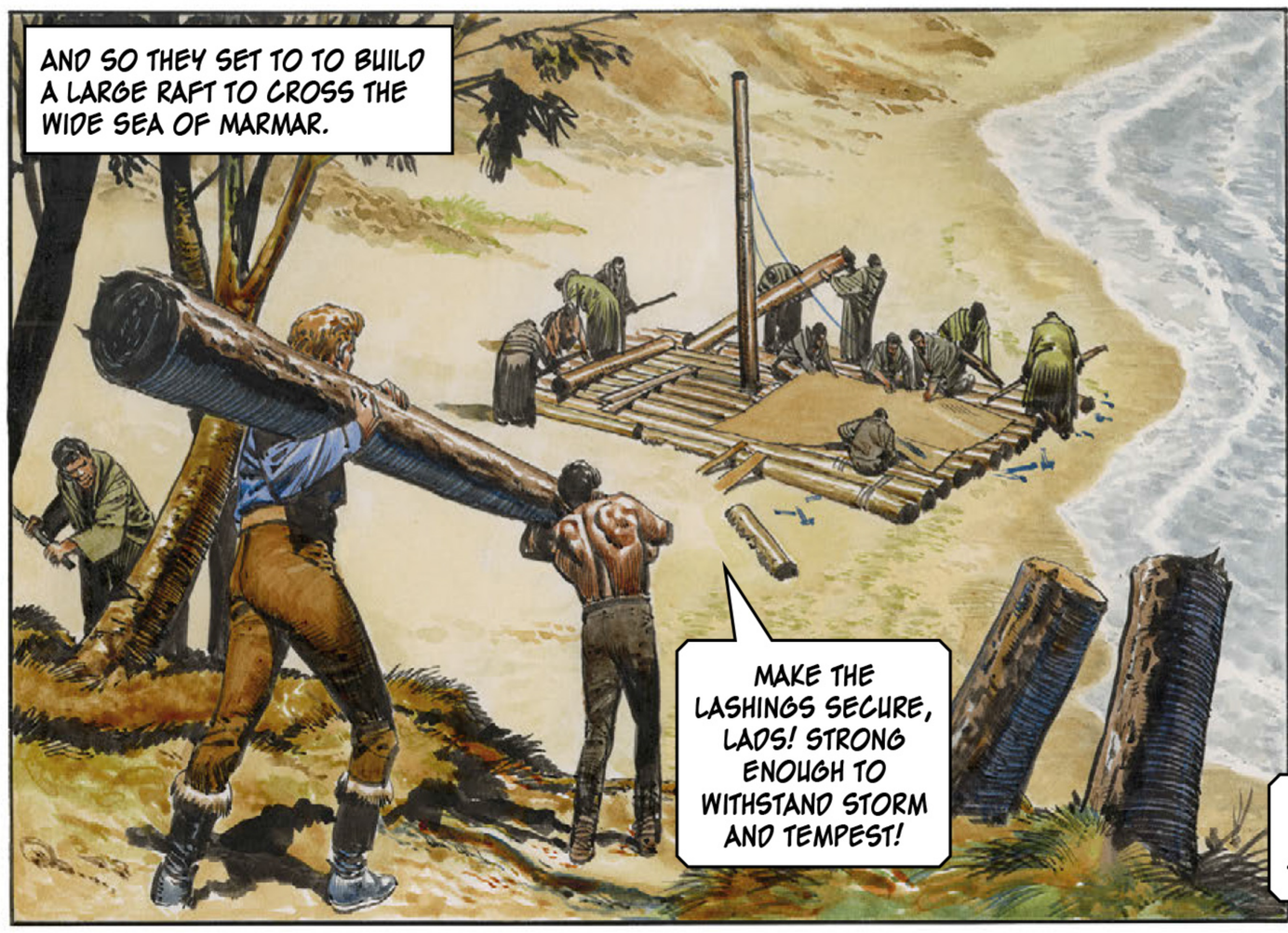
YOU CAN *ALL* WIN FORGIVENESS! ESCORT ME BACK TO TRIGAN CITY AND I PROMISE THAT MY UNCLE WILL GRANT YOU FREE PARDONS! WHAT DO YOU SAY?

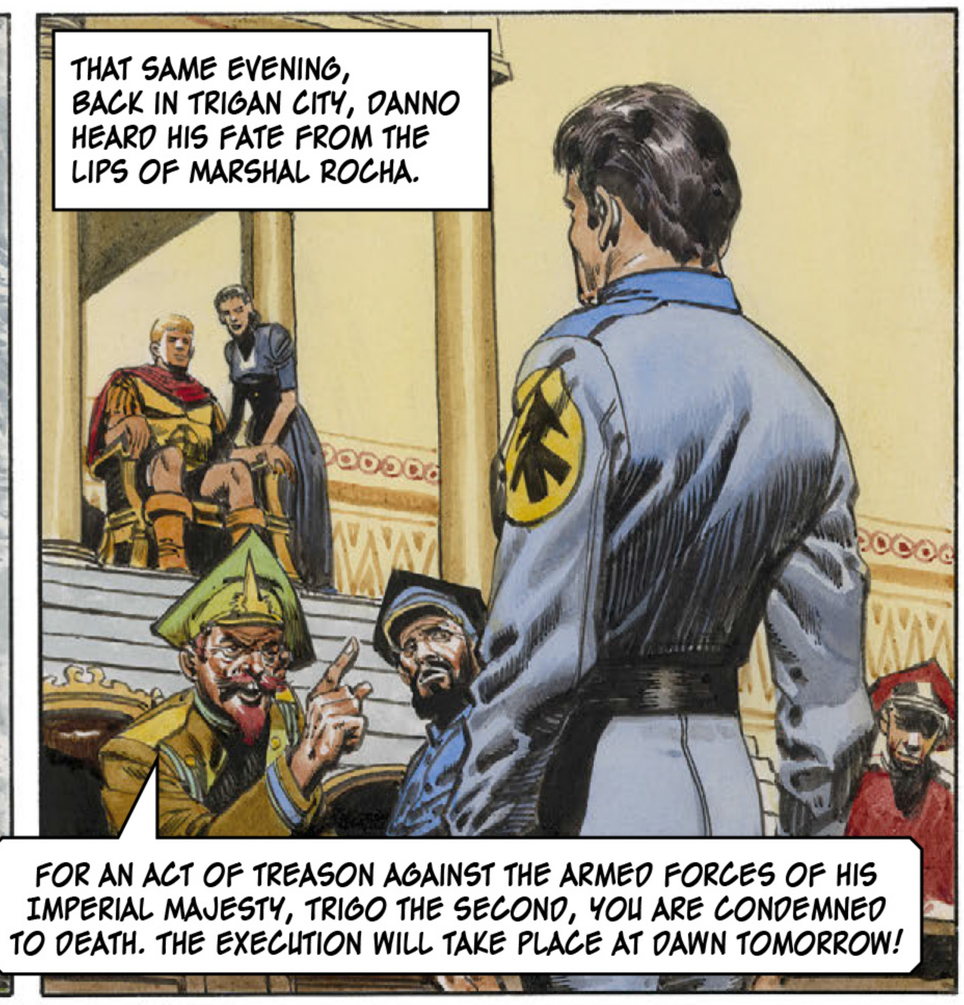
A MURMUR OF WILD EXCITEMENT AROSE FROM THE BAND – AND JANNO KNEW THAT HE HAD WON.

THINK! TO BE FREE MEN AGAIN!

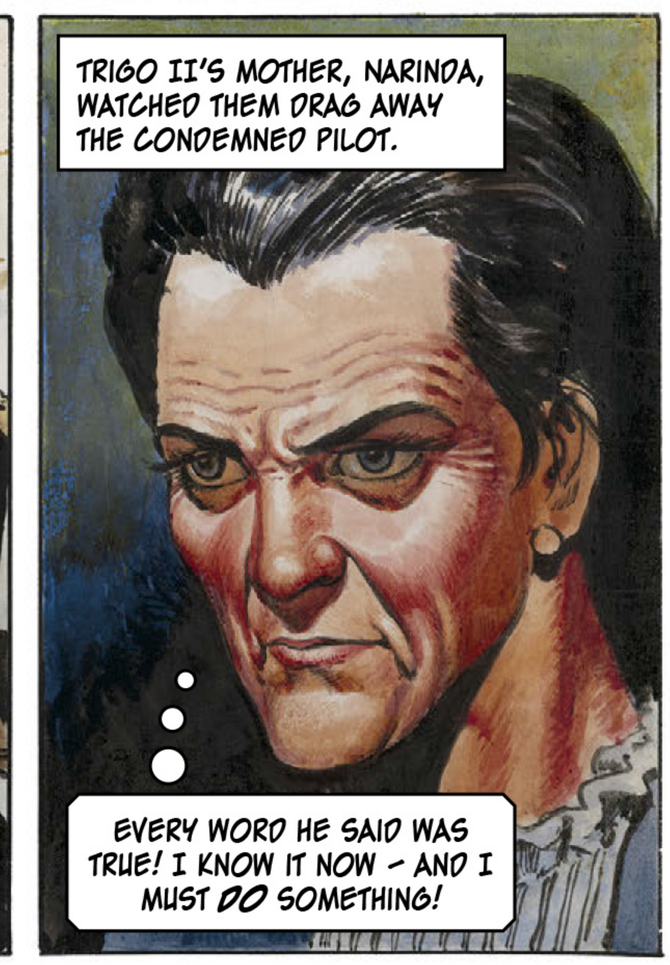
LONG LIVE LORD JANNO!

TO BE ABLE TO SEE OUR FAMILIES!

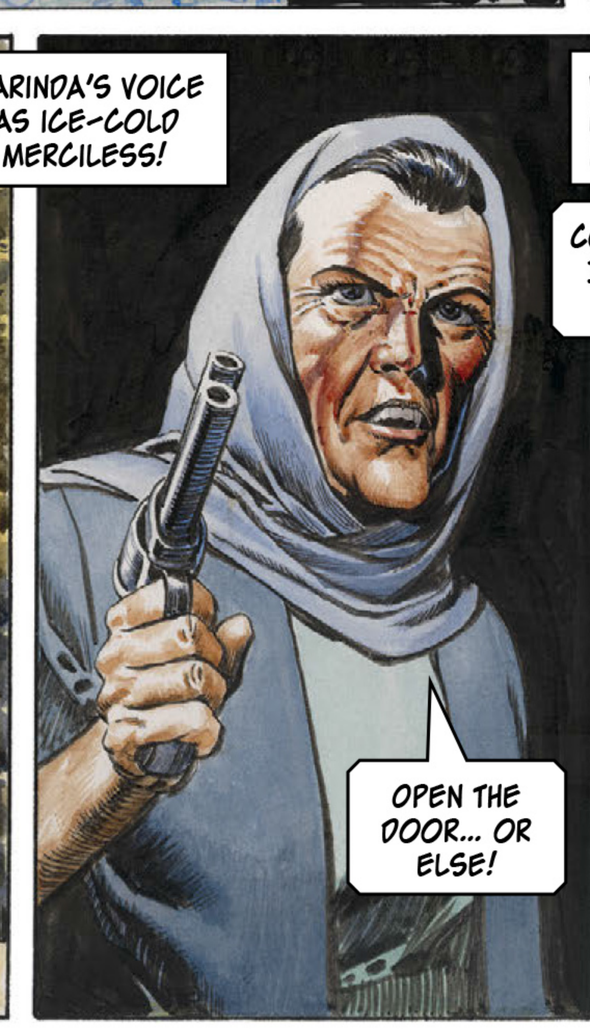

AND SO THEY SET TO TO BUILD A LARGE RAFT TO CROSS THE WIDE SEA OF MARMAR.
MAKE THE LASHINGS SECURE, LADS! STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND STORM AND TEMPEST!


THAT SAME EVENING, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, DANNO HEARD HIS FATE FROM THE LIPS OF MARSHAL ROCHA.
FOR AN ACT OF TREASON AGAINST THE ARMED FORCES OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, TRIGO THE SECOND, YOU ARE CONDEMNED TO DEATH. THE EXECUTION WILL TAKE PLACE AT DAWN TOMORROW!

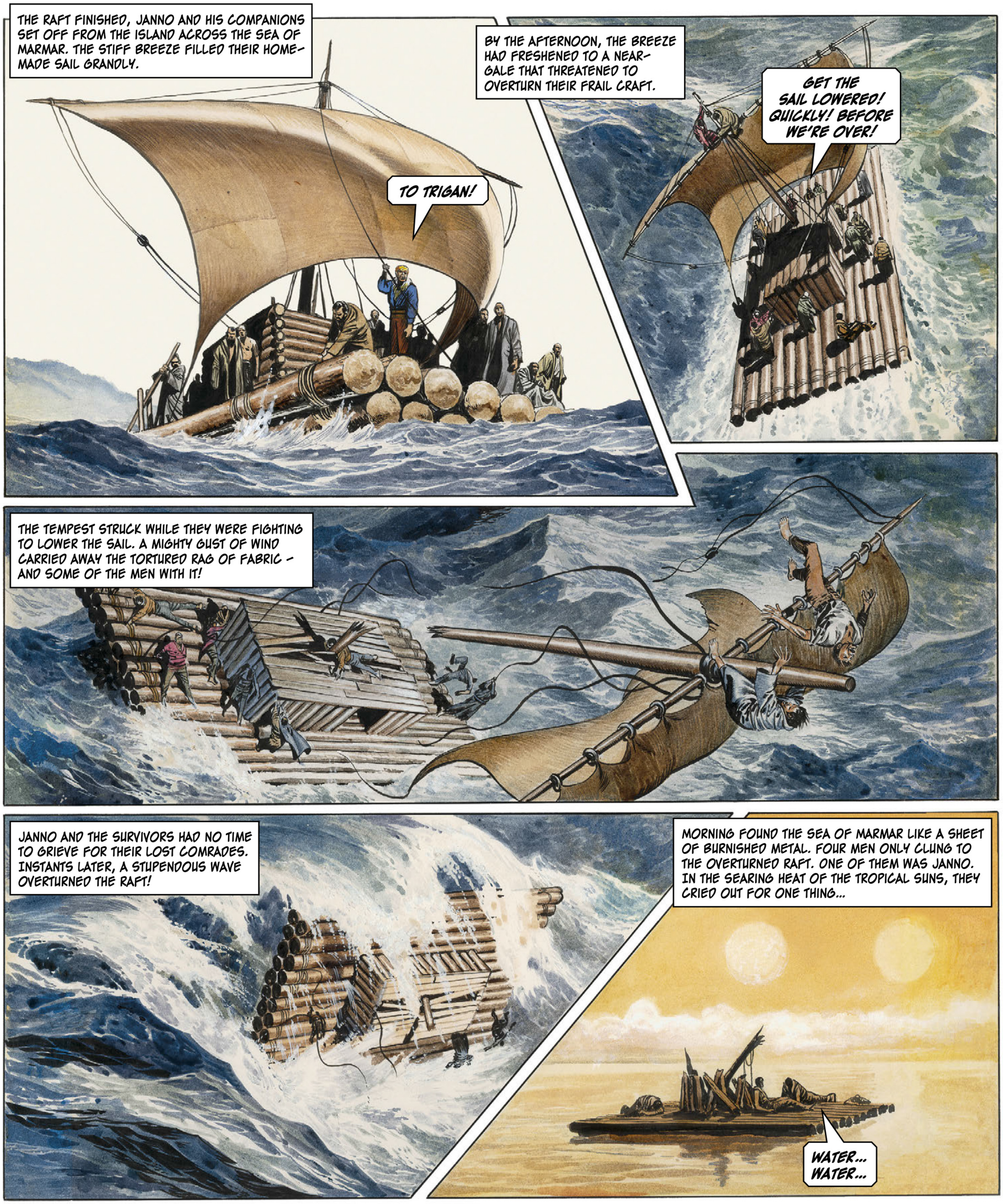
A FEW SWIFT PACES TOOK DANNO CLOSE TO THE FIGURE ON THE IMPERIAL THRONE. AS THE GUARDS BEAT HIM TO HIS KNEES, HIS VOICE RANG OUT IN ACCUSATION!
YOU ARE NO EMPEROR! YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A MINDLESS PUPPET MANIPULATED BY THAT SCOUNDREL ROCHA! ASK ROCHA WHAT HE DID TO THE IMPERIAL FAMILY... ASK HIM!


TRIGO II'S MOTHER, NARINDA, WATCHED THEM DRAG AWAY THE CONDEMNED PILOT.
EVERY WORD HE SAID WAS TRUE! I KNOW IT NOW – AND I MUST DO SOMETHING!

THE LONG NIGHT PASSED. IT WAS NEARLY DAWN WHEN THE SENTRY ON DANNO'S CELL SAW SOMEONE APPROACH.
WHO COMES?
AH! IS IT THE LADY NARINDA?

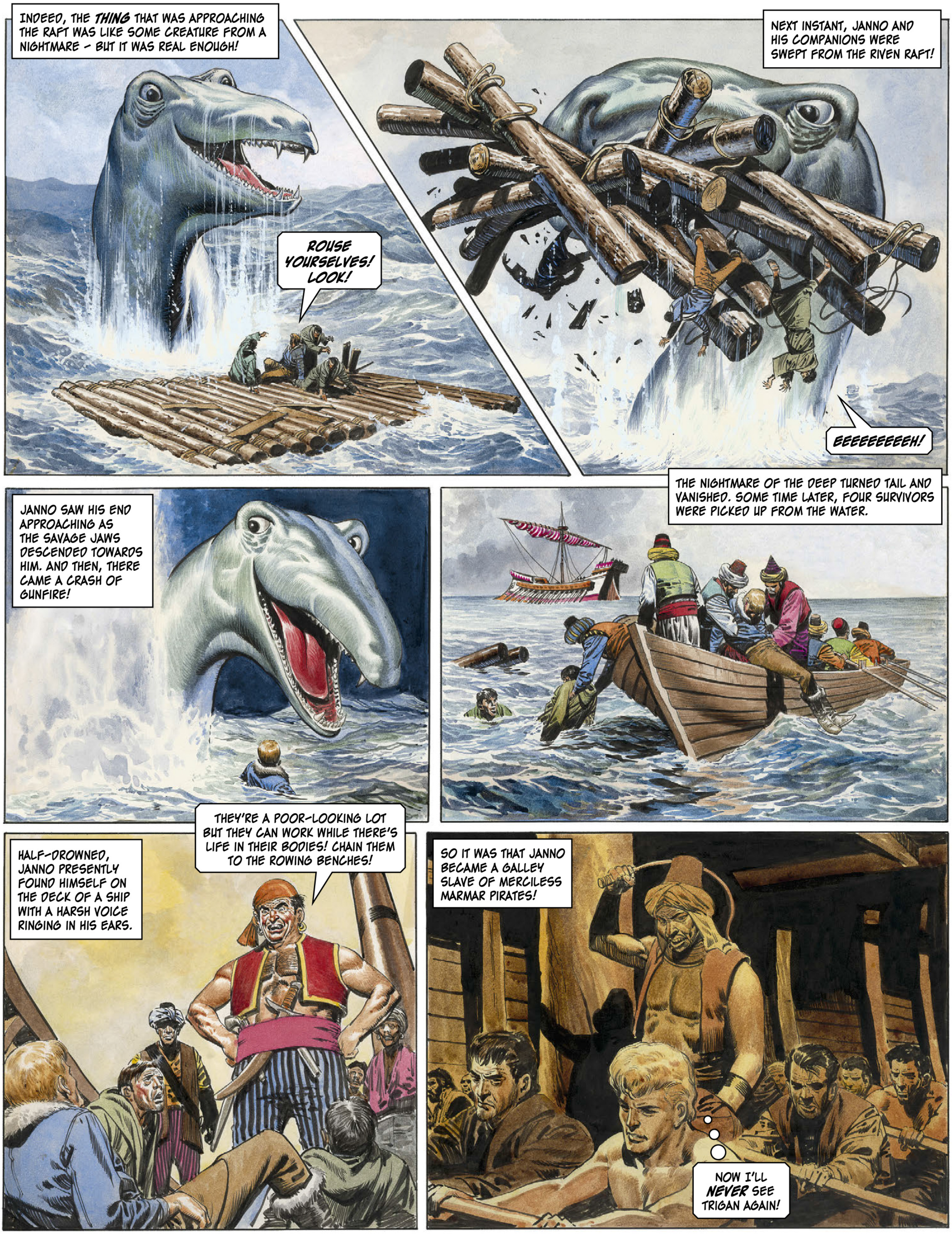

NARINDA'S VOICE WAS ICE-COLD – MERCILESS!
OPEN THE DOOR... OR ELSE!

WHEN DANNO STEPPED OUT OF HIS CELL, HE EXPECTED TO FIND THE EXECUTION PARTY AWAITING HIM. INSTEAD...
COME WITH ME! I HAVE WORK FOR YOU!


THE RAFT FINISHED, JANNO AND HIS COMPANIONS SET OFF FROM THE ISLAND ACROSS THE SEA OF MARMAR. THE STIFF BREEZE FILLED THEIR HOME-MADE SAIL GRANDLY.
TO TRIGAN!
BY THE AFTERNOON, THE BREEZE HAD FRESHENED TO A NEAR-GALE THAT THREATENED TO OVERTURN THEIR FRAIL CRAFT.
GET THE SAIL LOWERED! QUICKLY! BEFORE WE'RE OVER!
THE TEMPEST STRUCK WHILE THEY WERE FIGHTING TO LOWER THE SAIL. A MIGHTY GUST OF WIND CARRIED AWAY THE TORTURED RAG OF FABRIC – AND SOME OF THE MEN WITH IT!
JANNO AND THE SURVIVORS HAD NO TIME TO GRIEVE FOR THEIR LOST COMRADES. INSTANTS LATER, A STUPENDOUS WAVE OVERTURNED THE RAFT!
MORNING FOUND THE SEA OF MARMAR LIKE A SHEET OF BURNISHED METAL. FOUR MEN ONLY CLUNG TO THE OVERTURNED RAFT. ONE OF THEM WAS JANNO. IN THE SEARING HEAT OF THE TROPICAL SUNS, THEY CRIED OUT FOR ONE THING...
WATER... WATER...

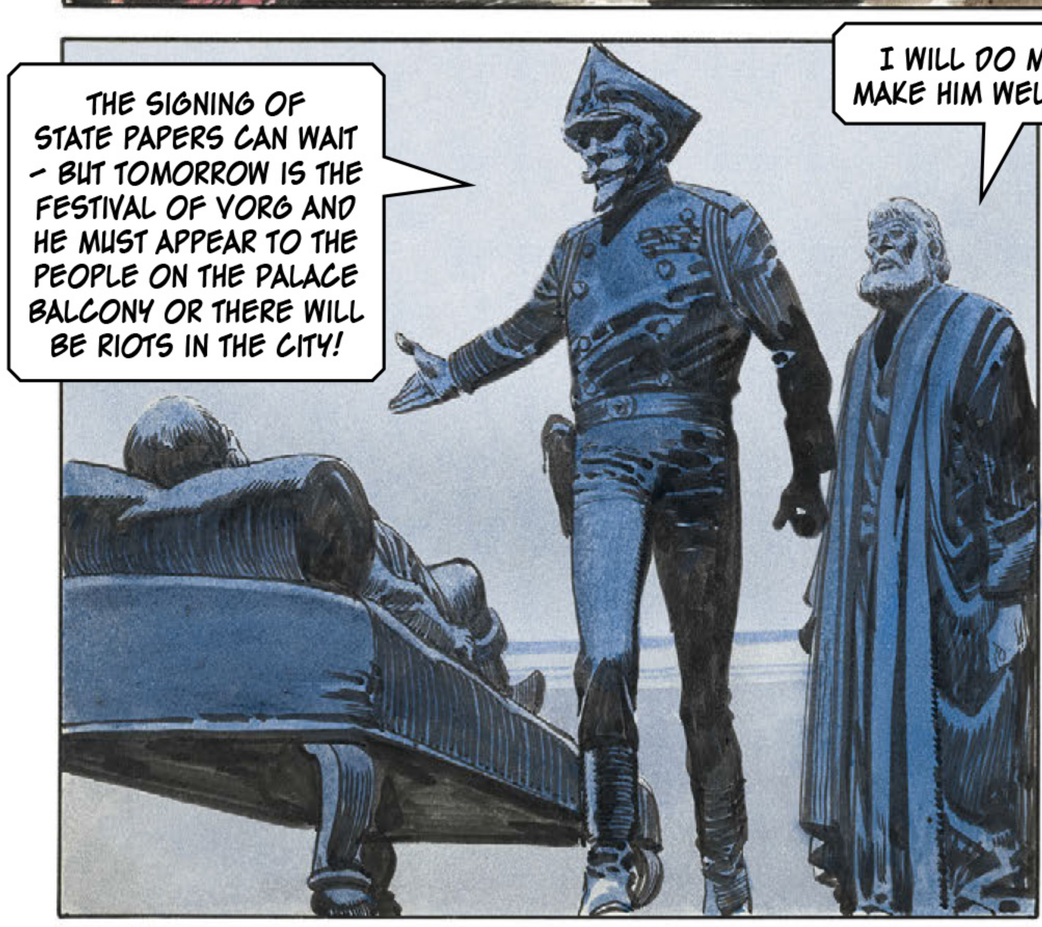
BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE DAWN HAD BROKEN OVER THE GRIM SCAFFOLD WHERE THE YOUNG PILOT WHO HAD BEEN CONVICTED OF TREASON WAS TO MEET HIS END. MARSHAL ROCHA HIMSELF WAS THERE TO SEE HIS JUSTICE CARRIED OUT. BUT...
WHAT'S THIS YOU SAY? GONE?
DISAPPEARED, MARSHAL! AND THE GUARD WITH HIM!
THEN FIND HIM! TEAR THE CITY APART – BUT FIND HIM! THAT TRAITOR MUST PERISH!
OBEDIENT TO ROCHA'S ORDER, THE IMPERIAL GUARDS SCOURED THE CITY, WITHOUT ANY REGARD FOR PERSON OR PROPERTY, IN SEARCH OF THE CONDEMNED OFFICER.
I PROTEST! I AM A JUDGE OF THE IMPERIAL COURT!
SILENCE! BY ORDER OF MARSHAL ROCHA!
FROM A WINDOW OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE, THE EMPEROR'S MOTHER, NARINDA, SAW IT ALL.
THEY ARE LOOKING FOR YOU – BUT THEY WILL NEVER THINK TO LOOK HERE, IN THE IMPERIAL APARTMENTS!
WITH HER WAS THE CONDEMNED PILOT, DANNO, WHOM SHE HAD RESCUED.
MADAME, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND! WHY ARE YOU HELPING ME? YOU... THE MOTHER OF THE EMPEROR!
THE FALSE EMPEROR, YOU MEAN! THE PUPPET EMPEROR! THE SIMPLE LAD TAKEN FROM A BACK STREET TO SIT ON TRIGO'S THRONE AND PLAY MAKE-BELIEVE WHILE ROCHA AND HIS CRONIES DESTROY THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
JOYFULLY, DANNO SEIZED THE WOMAN'S HANDS.
THEN... YOU ARE ONE OF US? A PATRIOT...?
YES! ARE THERE MANY PATRIOTS LEFT IN THE CITY? YOU MUST CONTACT THEM, DANNO! TELL THEM THAT THEY HAVE MY SUPPORT! I HAVE SOME POWER... AND I WILL DO ANYTHING -ANYTHING! – TO HELP OVERTHROW ROCHA!
MOMENTS LATER, DANNO WAS LEAVING THE PALACE BY WAY OF THE GARDEN.
TAKE CARE, DANNO. IF YOU ARE FOUND, YOU WILL BE DRAGGED STRAIGHT TO THE SCAFFOLD!
HAVE NO FEAR, MADAME. I SHALL RETURN WITH NEWS FROM OUR MANY FRIENDS IN THE CITY!
NO SOONER HAD THE YOUNG PILOT GONE WHEN A SOUND MADE NARINDA WHIRL AROUND.
MY SON!
TRIGO THE SECOND, PUPPET EMPEROR OF TRIGAN, GLARED RESENTFULLY AT HIS MOTHER.
I HEARD ALL! YOU ARE A TRAITOR TO ME AND TO THE EMPIRE AND I NO LONGER ACKNOWLEDGE YOU AS MY MOTHER! I WILL NOW CALL THE GUARDS AND HAVE YOU PUT UNDER ARREST!

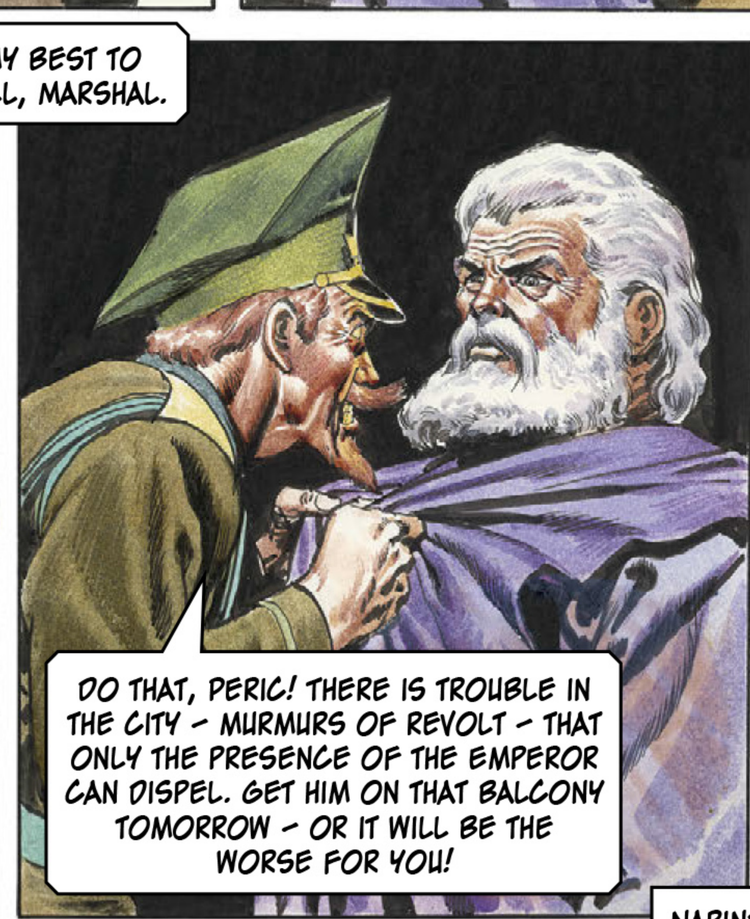
AS HE TURNED TO CALL THE GUARD, TRIGO II SAW THE GLINT OF A WEAPON IN HER HAND.
YOU- YOU WOULDN'T SHOOT ME! NOT YOUR OWN SON - YOUR EMPEROR!
NARINDA REPLIED IN AN ICE-COLD VOICE.
I HAVE BEEN A FOOL, MY SON, BUT I HAVE COME TO THE END OF MY FOLLY! IF I HAVE TO SACRIFICE YOU FOR THE SAKE OF THE POOR PEOPLE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, THEN I WILL DO IT!
SHE CROSSED TO A CUPBOARD.
WHAT- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
AND...
DRINK THIS!
NO! NO!
DRINK - OR DIE!
LATER THAT EVENING, MARSHAL ROCHA CALLED AT THE IMPERIAL APARTMENTS WITH MORE STATE PAPERS FOR THE EMPEROR TO SIGN. HE WAS GREETED BY NARINDA.
YOUR BUSINESS WILL HAVE TO WAIT INDEFINITELY! MY SON IS ILL AND CAN RECEIVE NO ONE!
ILL, MADAME? WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT! I WILL SEND A PHYSICIAN TO EXAMINE HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
IT WAS OLD PERIC - THE WISEST SCIENTIST ON ELEKTON, A MAN OF MEDICINE AND ALSO A FRIEND OF THE FORMER EMPEROR - WHOM ROCHA HAD ORDERED TO VISIT TRIGO THE SECOND. PERIC EXAMINED THE EMPEROR, WHO LAY UNCONSCIOUS.
MADAME! HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY HAS BEEN DRUGGED!
YES! I DRUGGED HIM!
BUT... WHY?
BECAUSE I LOVE MY COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE, PERIC, AS I BELIEVE YOU DO ALSO!
MEANWHILE, ON A RAFT IN THE SEA OF MARMAR, THE FORMER EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, JANNO, ROUSED HIMSELF FROM A THIRST-HAUNTED STUPOR AND STARED INTO THE DISTANCE.
AM I DREAMING? I MUST BE DREAMING!


INDEED, THE THING THAT WAS APPROACHING THE RAFT WAS LIKE SOME CREATURE FROM A NIGHTMARE – BUT IT WAS REAL ENOUGH!
ROUSE YOURSELVES! LOOK!
NEXT INSTANT, JANNO AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE SWEPT FROM THE RIVEN RAFT!
EEEEEEEEEH!
JANNO SAW HIS END APPROACHING AS THE SAVAGE JAWS DESCENDED TOWARDS HIM. AND THEN, THERE CAME A CRASH OF GUNFIRE!
THE NIGHTMARE OF THE DEEP TURNED TAIL AND VANISHED. SOME TIME LATER, FOUR SURVIVORS WERE PICKED UP FROM THE WATER.
HALF-DROWNED, JANNO PRESENTLY FOUND HIMSELF ON THE DECK OF A SHIP WITH A HARSH VOICE RINGING IN HIS EARS.
THEY'RE A POOR-LOOKING LOT BUT THEY CAN WORK WHILE THERE'S LIFE IN THEIR BODIES! CHAIN THEM TO THE ROWING BENCHES!
SO IT WAS THAT JANNO BECAME A GALLEY SLAVE OF MERCILESS MARMAR PIRATES!
NOW I'LL NEVER SEE TRIGAN AGAIN!

SHORTLY AFTER NARINDA HAD CONFIDED IN PERIC, THEY WERE INTERRUPTED – BY MARSHAL ROCHA!
WELL? AND HOW IS THE EMPEROR?

PERIC REPLIED CALMLY.
HE IS... ER... IN A VERY BAD CONDITION, MARSHAL, AND MUST NOT BE DISTURBED.
TEN THOUSAND CURSES! HE WILL HAVE TO BE DISTURBED!

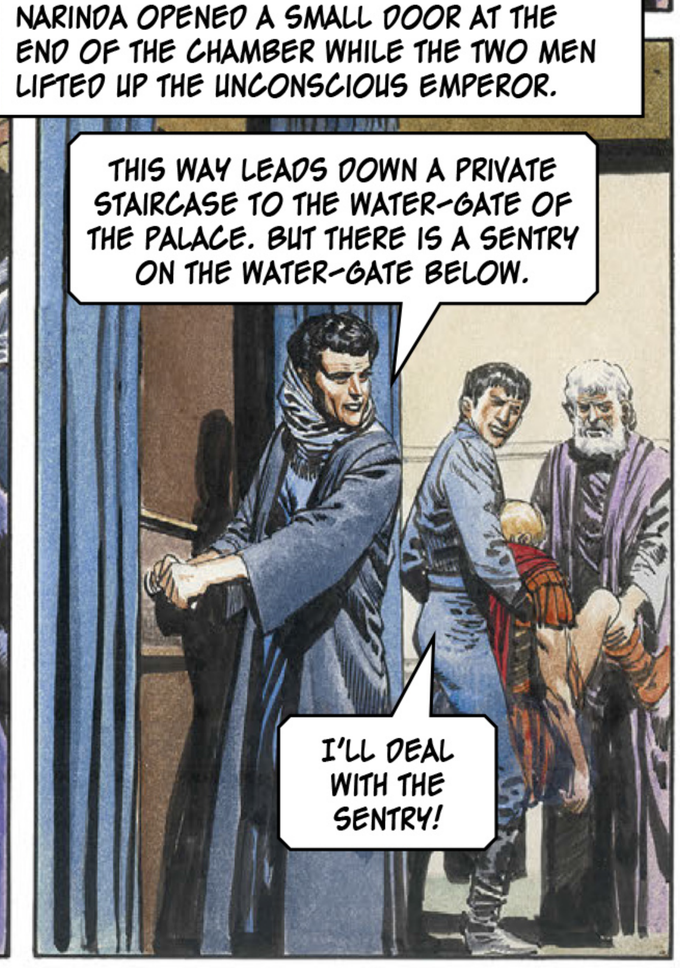

THE SIGNING OF STATE PAPERS CAN WAIT – BUT TOMORROW IS THE FESTIVAL OF VORG AND HE MUST APPEAR TO THE PEOPLE ON THE PALACE BALCONY OR THERE WILL BE RIOTS IN THE CITY!
I WILL DO MY BEST TO MAKE HIM WELL, MARSHAL.

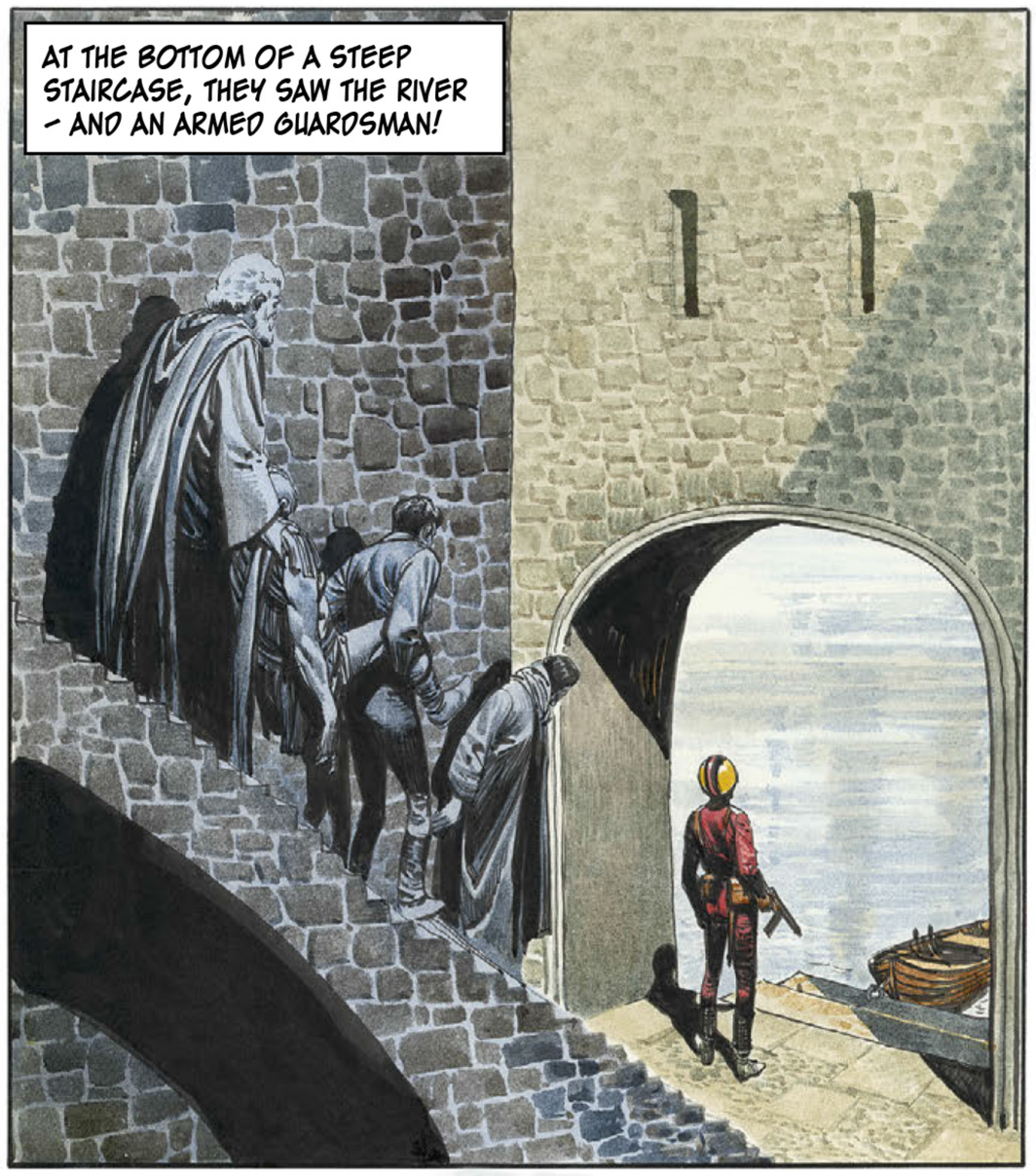

DO THAT, PERIC! THERE IS TROUBLE IN THE CITY – MURMURS OF REVOLT – THAT ONLY THE PRESENCE OF THE EMPEROR CAN DISPEL. GET HIM ON THAT BALCONY TOMORROW – OR IT WILL BE THE WORSE FOR YOU!

ALONE AGAIN WITH THE DRUGGED AND UNCONSCIOUS EMPEROR, NARINDA AND PERIC STARED AT EACH OTHER AND, THEN...
MADAME! WHAT'S TO BE DONE?
WE MUST SPIRIT THE EMPEROR OUT OF THE CITY AND INTO HIDING– WHAT'S THAT?

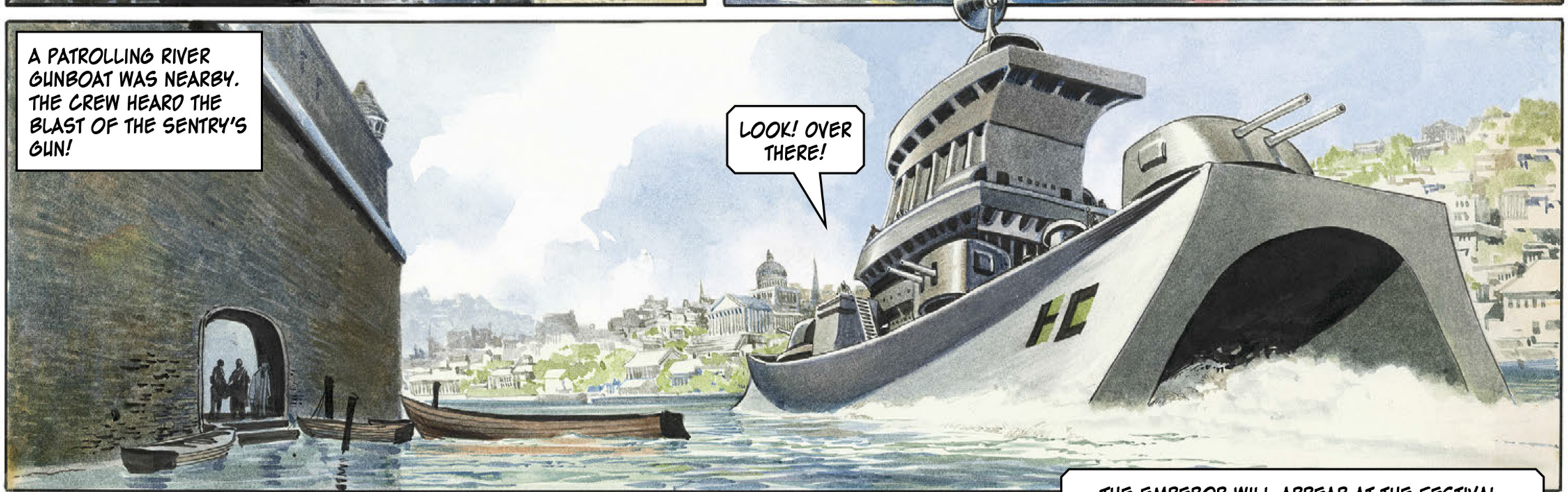
A FIGURE WAS SCALING THE PALACE WALL FROM THE GARDEN.
DANNO! YOU'RE BACK!
YES, MADAME! AND I BRING GREAT NEWS!

THE YOUNG AIR PILOT BLURTED OUT HIS NEWS.
THERE ARE OVER A HUNDRED MEN OF THE ARMED FORCES BANDED TOGETHER TO OUST ROCHA AND HIS CRONIES! THEY PLAN TO STRIKE DURING THE FESTIVAL OF VORG TOMORROW!
GOOD! THEN WE'LL SEE TO IT THAT ROCHA DOES NOT HAVE HIS PUPPET EMPEROR TO ENSURE HIMSELF OF THE PEOPLE'S SUPPORT TOMORROW!

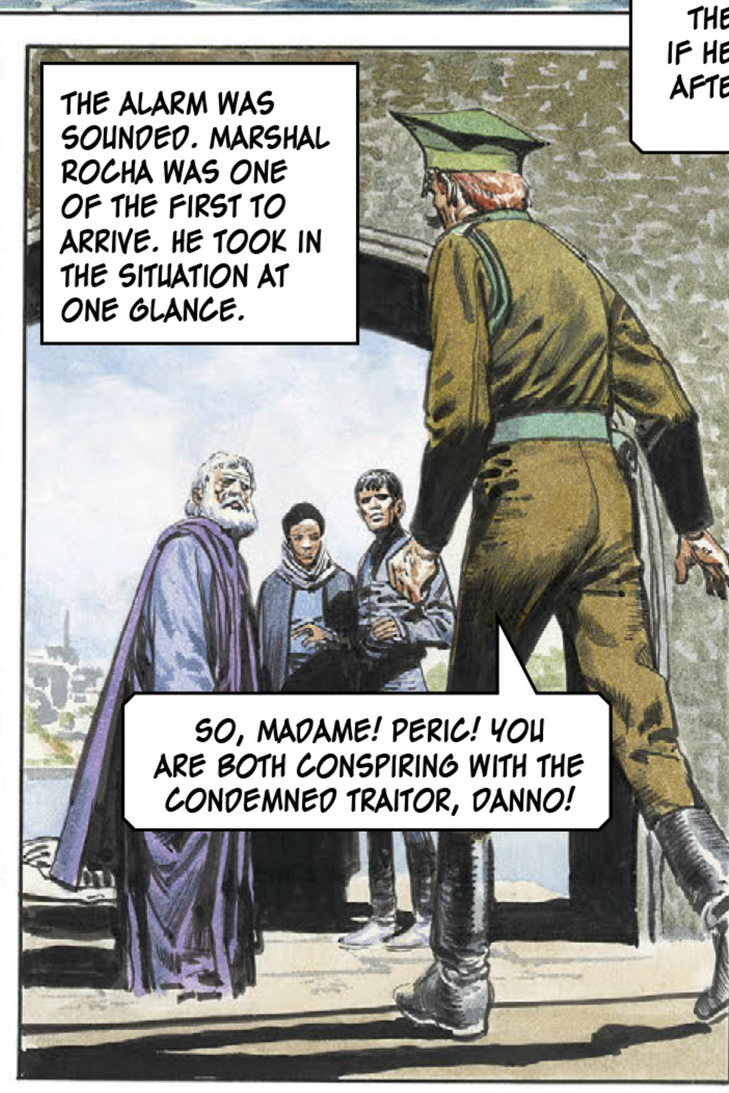

NARINDA OPENED A SMALL DOOR AT THE END OF THE CHAMBER WHILE THE TWO MEN LIFTED UP THE UNCONSCIOUS EMPEROR.
THIS WAY LEADS DOWN A PRIVATE STAIRCASE TO THE WATER-GATE OF THE PALACE. BUT THERE IS A SENTRY ON THE WATER-GATE BELOW.
I'LL DEAL WITH THE SENTRY!


AT THE BOTTOM OF A STEEP STAIRCASE, THEY SAW THE RIVER – AND AN ARMED GUARDSMAN!

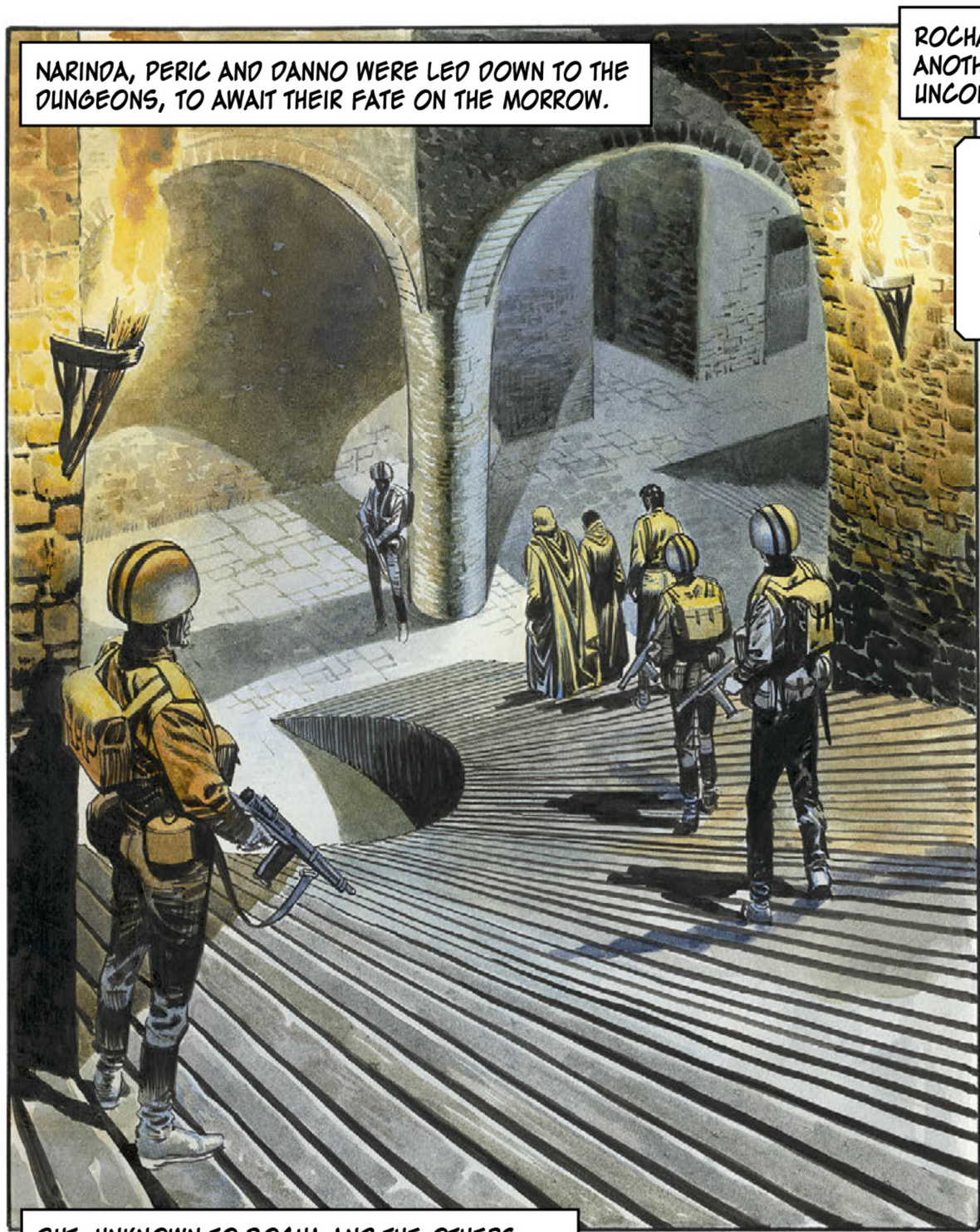
THE SENTRY NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT HIM!

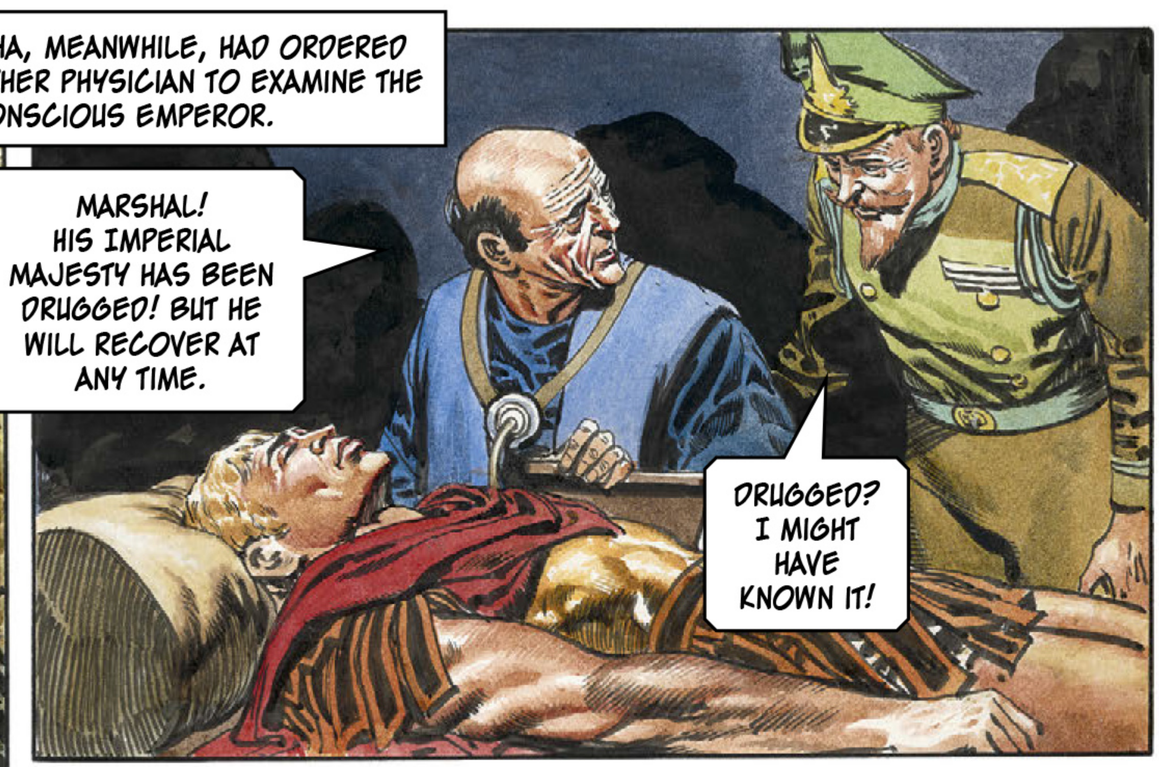

A PATROLLING RIVER GUNBOAT WAS NEARBY. THE CREW HEARD THE BLAST OF THE SENTRY'S GUN!
LOOK! OVER THERE!
HC

MOMENTS LATER, ALL HOPE WAS LOST FOR THE CONSPIRATORS!
BY THE STARS! IT'S THE LADY NARINDA!
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE EMPEROR?


THE ALARM WAS SOUNDED. MARSHAL ROCHA WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO ARRIVE. HE TOOK IN THE SITUATION AT ONE GLANCE.
SO, MADAME! PERIC! YOU ARE BOTH CONSPIRING WITH THE CONDEMNED TRAITOR, DANNO!

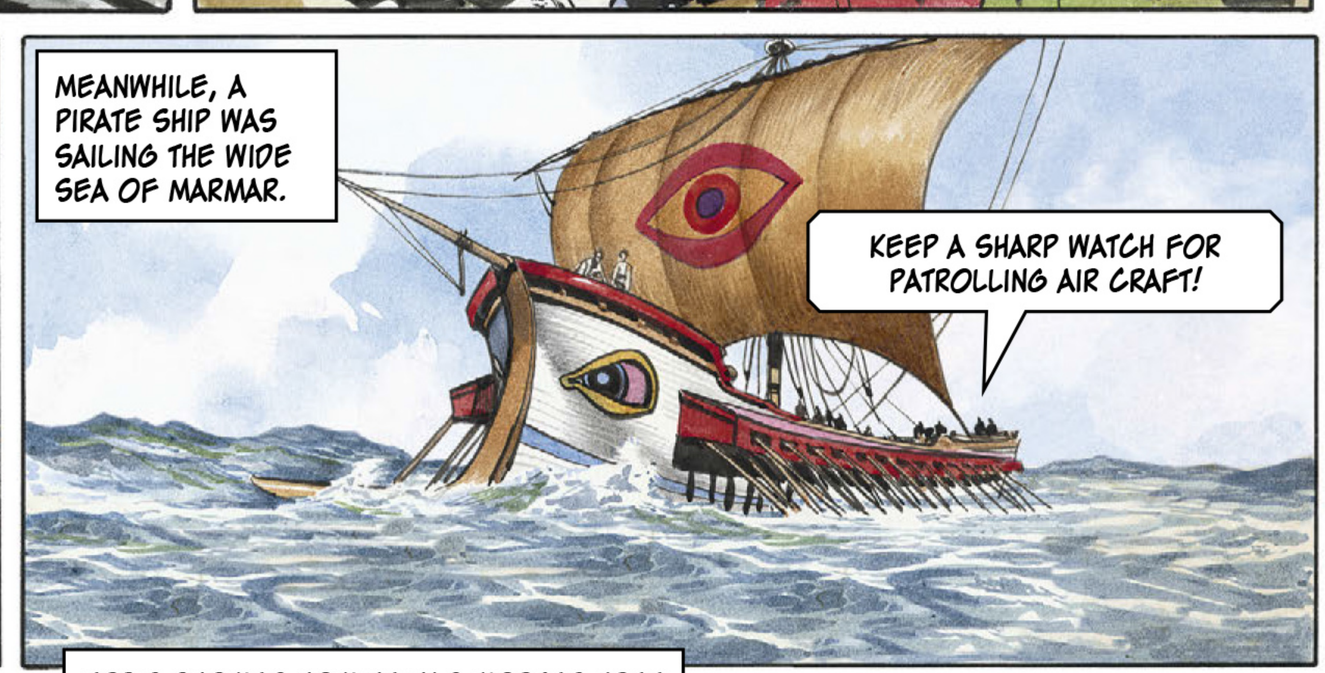
THE EMPEROR WILL APPEAR AT THE FESTIVAL, IF HE HAS TO BE PROPPED UP ON HIS FEET! AND AFTERWARDS, BY WAY OF CELEBRATION, THERE WILL BE A *TRIPLE* EXECUTION!

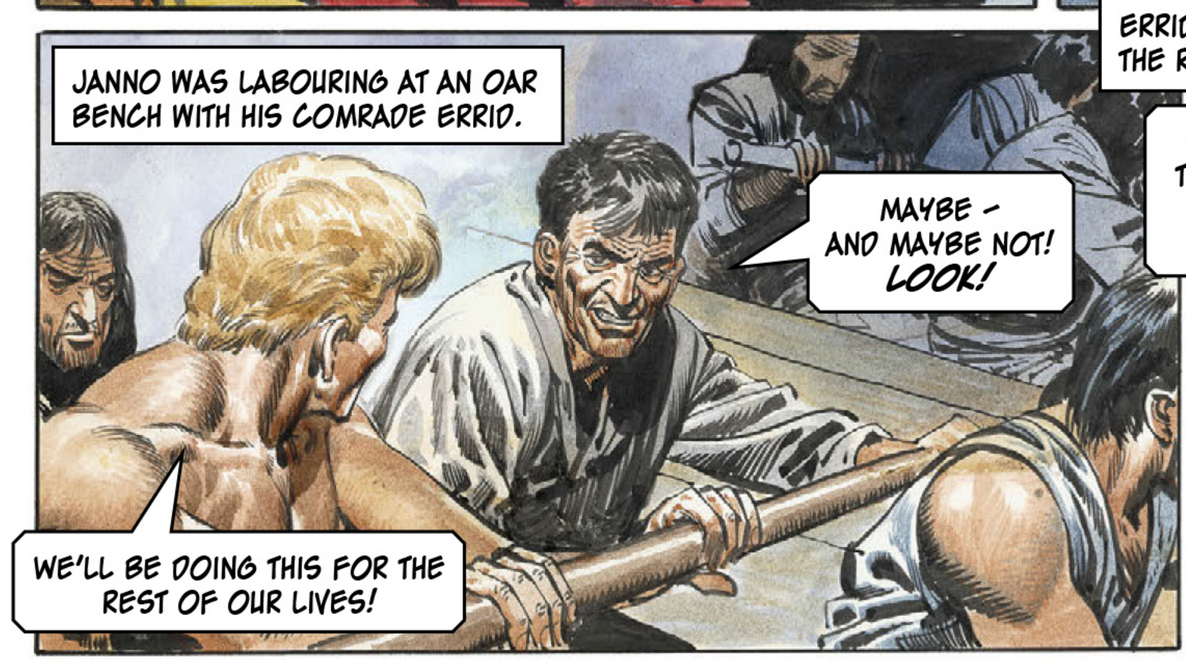

NARINDA, PERIC AND DANNO WERE LED DOWN TO THE DUNGEONS, TO AWAIT THEIR FATE ON THE MORROW.


ROCHA, MEANWHILE, HAD ORDERED ANOTHER PHYSICIAN TO EXAMINE THE UNCONSCIOUS EMPEROR.
MARSHAL! HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY HAS BEEN DRUGGED! BUT HE WILL RECOVER AT ANY TIME.
DRUGGED? I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN IT!

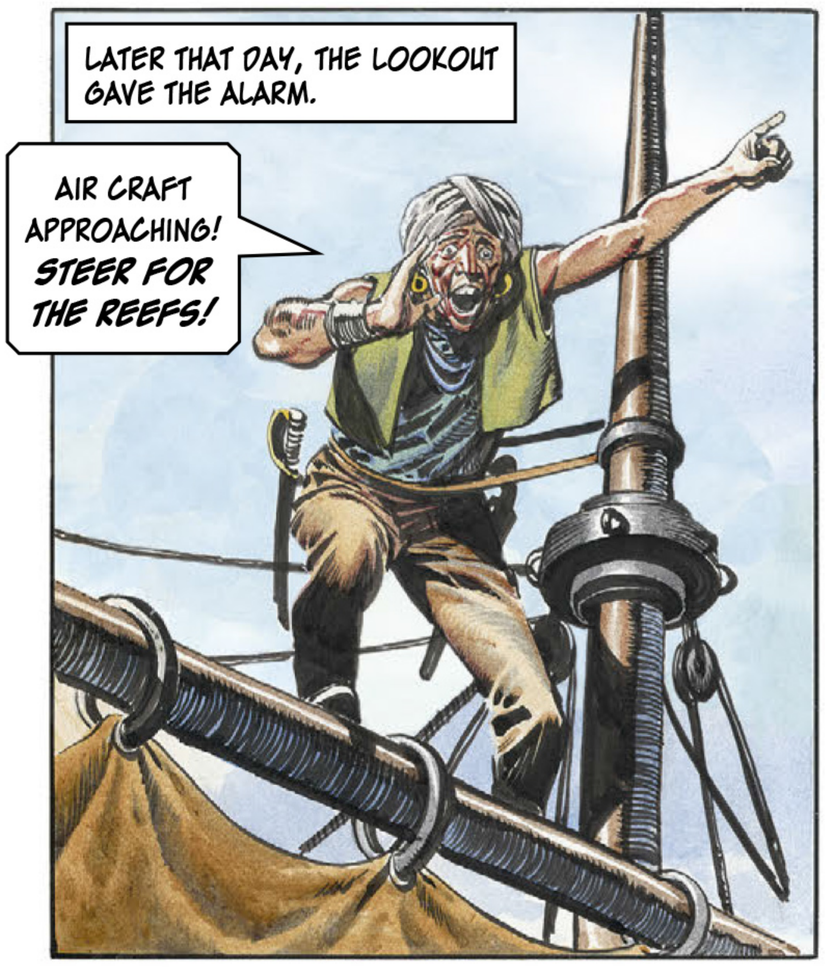
ROCHA ADDRESSED HIS COMPANIONS – THE MILITARY LEADERS OF THE EMPIRE WHO WERE IN LEAGUE WITH HIM.
TOMORROW, GENTLEMEN, THAT CONTEMPTIBLE CREATURE WE CALL THE EMPEROR WILL READ TO THE PEOPLE A CAREFULLY WORDED SPEECH THAT I HAVE PREPARED FOR HIM. AFTERWARDS, NARINDA AND HER ACCOMPLICES WILL BE EXECUTED AS A WARNING TO TRAITORS!

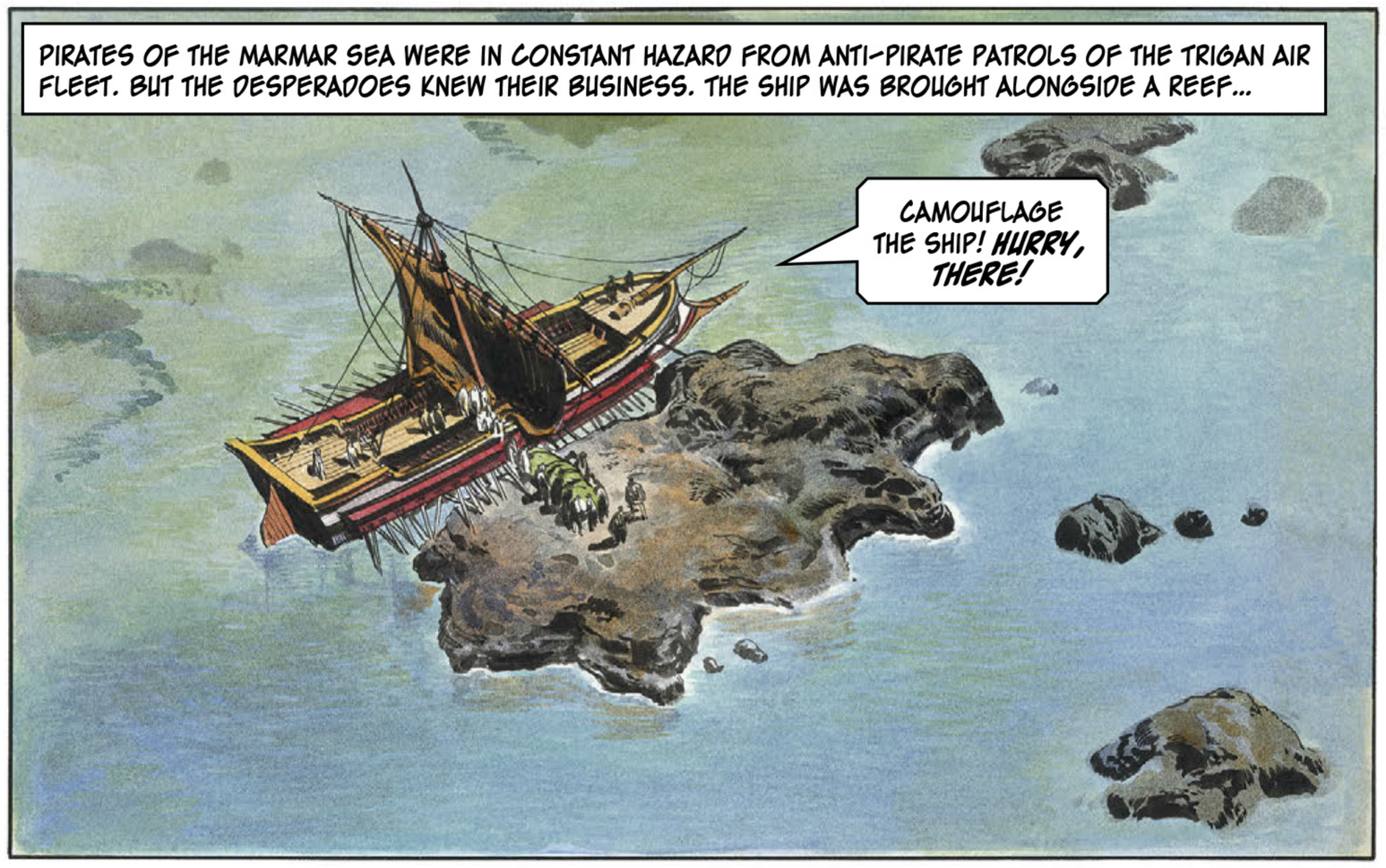
BUT, UNKNOWN TO ROCHA AND THE OTHERS, TRIGO II HAD RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS – AND HAD HEARD EVERY WORD!
I– I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! THEY CAN'T BE SPEAKING OF ME AND MY MOTHER!


MEANWHILE, A PIRATE SHIP WAS SAILING THE WIDE SEA OF MARMAR.
KEEP A SHARP WATCH FOR PATROLLING AIR CRAFT!

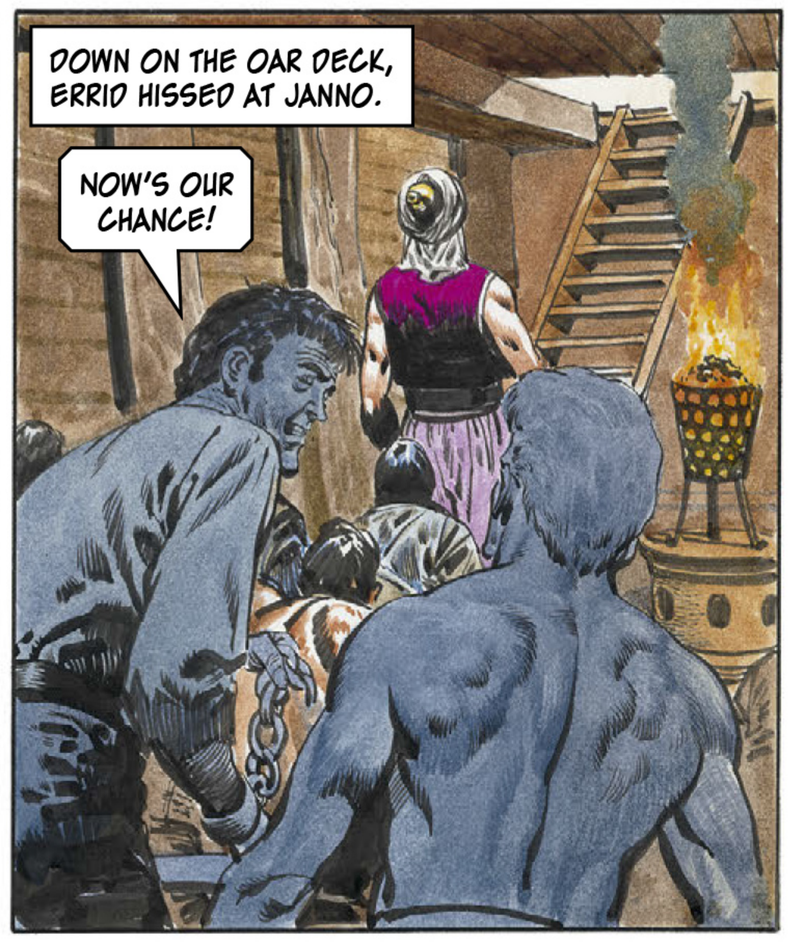

JANNO WAS LABOURING AT AN OAR BENCH WITH HIS COMRADE ERRIO.
MAYBE – AND MAYBE NOT! LOOK!
WE'LL BE DOING THIS FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES!

ERRIO SHOWED HOW HE HAD WORKED FREE THE RING BOLT THAT SECURED THEIR CHAIN.
SO? IF WE ATTEMPTED TO LEAVE THE OAR DECK WE'D BE CUT DOWN IMMEDIATELY!
IT'S ALL A MATTER OF AWAITING OUR OPPORTUNITY, JANNO!


LATER THAT DAY, THE LOOKOUT GAVE THE ALARM.
AIR CRAFT APPROACHING! STEER FOR THE REEFS!

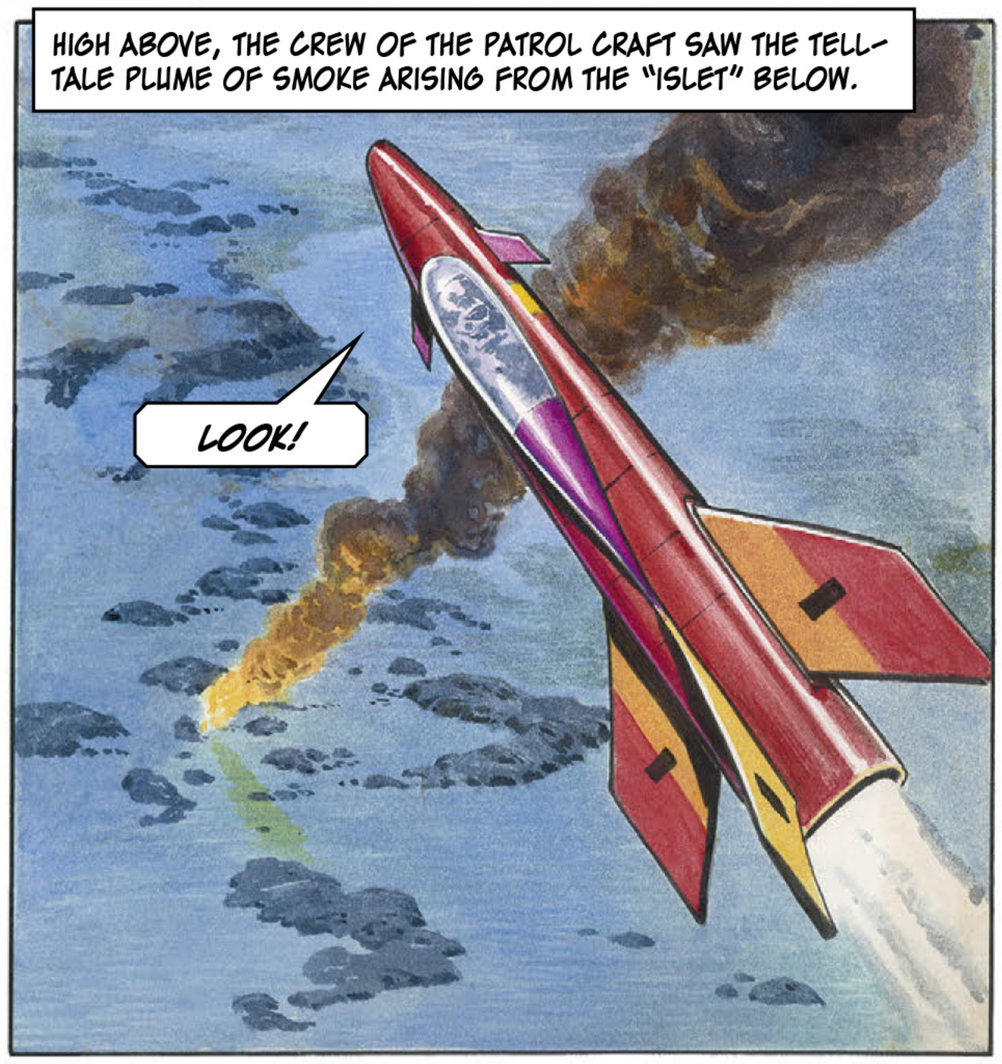

PIRATES OF THE MARMAR SEA WERE IN CONSTANT HAZARD FROM ANTI-PIRATE PATROLS OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET. BUT THE DESPERADOES KNEW THEIR BUSINESS. THE SHIP WAS BROUGHT ALONGSIDE A REEF...
CAMOUFLAGE THE SHIP! HURRY, THERE!

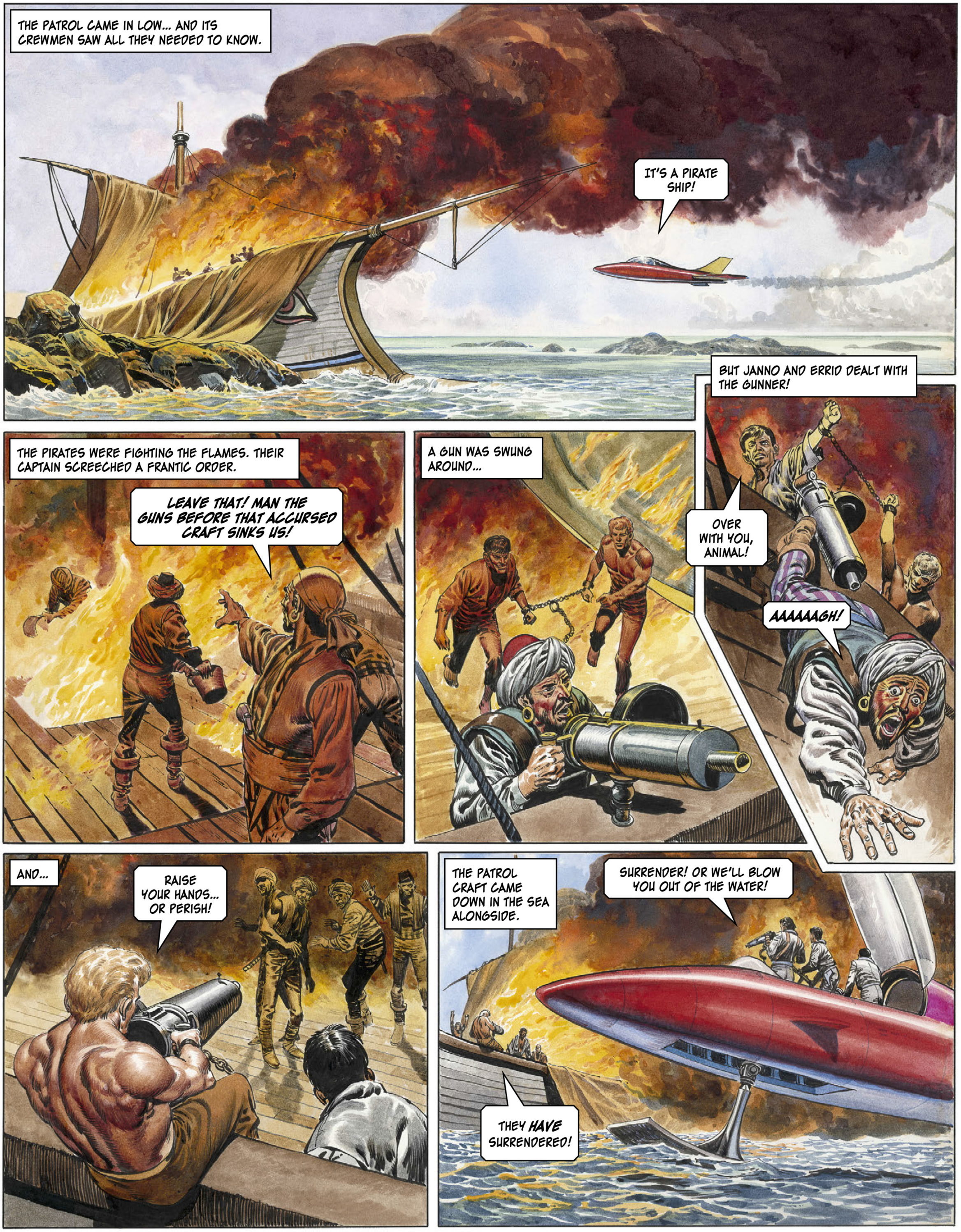
WITHIN MOMENTS, A CAMOUFLAGE NET WAS IN PLACE.
IT WILL NEVER SEE US NOW!


DOWN ON THE OAR DECK, ERRID HISSED AT JANNO.
NOW'S OUR CHANCE!

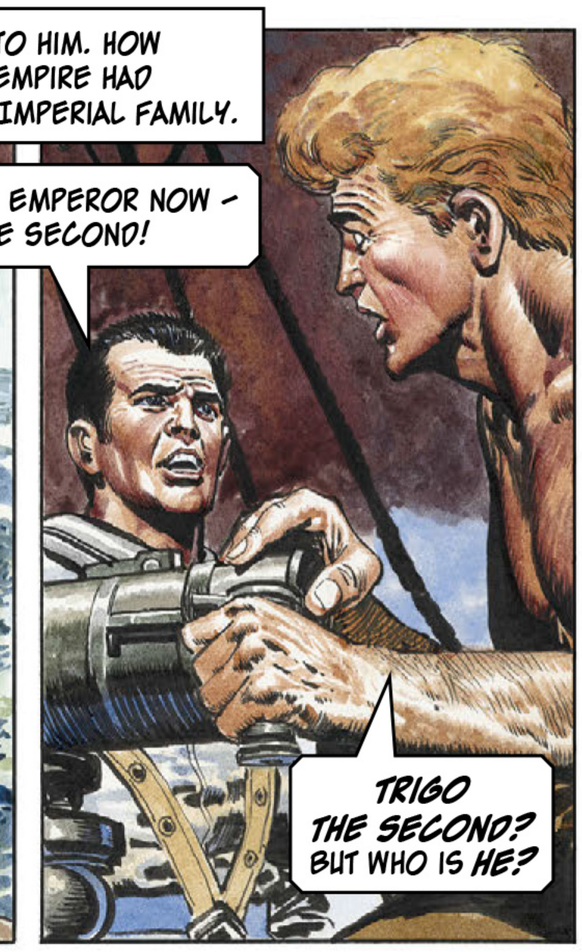
THE OVERSEER NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT HIM!

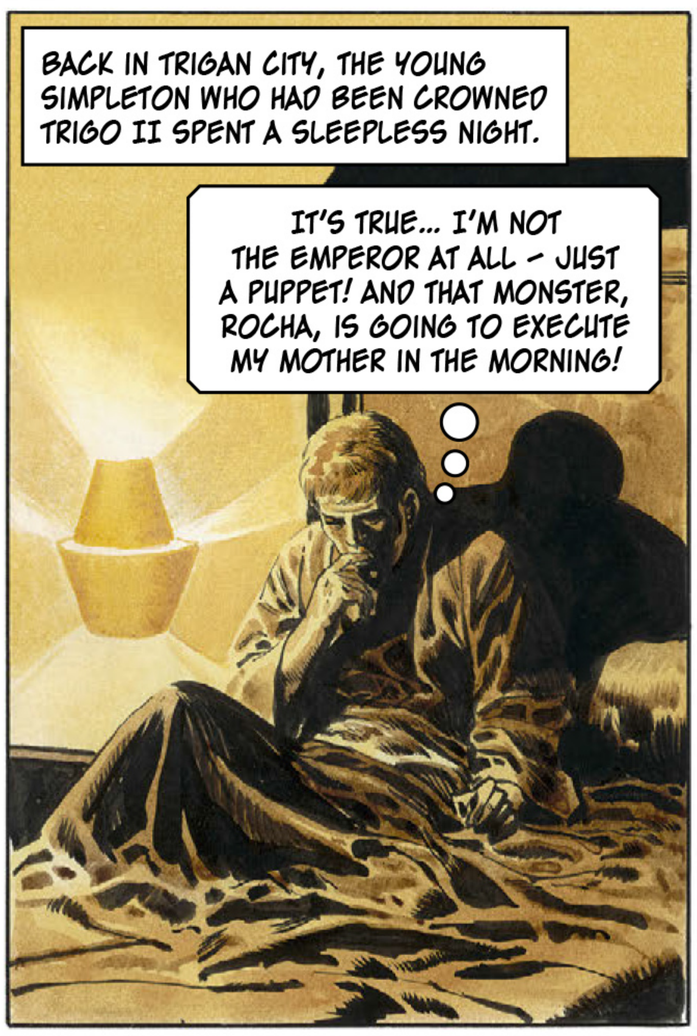
WITH A SWEEP OF HIS FOOT, ERRID OVERTURNED A BRAZIER. THE FLAMES SPEEDILY CAUGHT THE DRY TIMBERS.


HIGH ABOVE, THE CREW OF THE PATROL CRAFT SAW THE TELL-TALE PLUME OF SMOKE ARISING FROM THE "ISLET" BELOW.
LOOK!


THE PATROL CAME IN LOW... AND ITS CREWMEN SAW ALL THEY NEEDED TO KNOW.
IT'S A PIRATE SHIP!
THE PIRATES WERE FIGHTING THE FLAMES. THEIR CAPTAIN SCREECHED A FRANTIC ORDER.
LEAVE THAT! MAN THE GUNS BEFORE THAT ACCURSED CRAFT SINKS US!
A GUN WAS SWUNG AROUND...
BUT JANNO AND ERRID DEALT WITH THE GUNNER!
OVER WITH YOU, ANIMAL!
AAAAAAGH!
AND...
RAISE YOUR HANDS... OR PERISH!
THE PATROL CRAFT CAME DOWN IN THE SEA ALONGSIDE.
SURRENDER! OR WE'LL BLOW YOU OUT OF THE WATER!
THEY HAVE SURRENDERED!

THE TRIGAN CREWMEN CAME ABOARD – AND RECOGNISED THE FIGURE IN CHAINS.
IT CAN'T BE! LORD JANNO! BUT– WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD LIKE THE EMPEROR AND YOUR FATHER!
THE EMPEROR? MY FATHER? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


THEN THE SHOCKING NEWS WAS GIVEN TO HIM. HOW THE MILITARY LEADERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE HAD ANNOUNCED THE DEATH OF THE ENTIRE IMPERIAL FAMILY.
WE HAVE A NEW EMPEROR NOW – TRIGO THE SECOND!
TRIGO THE SECOND? BUT WHO IS HE?


BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE YOUNG SIMPLETON WHO HAD BEEN CROWNED TRIGO II SPENT A SLEEPLESS NIGHT.
IT'S TRUE... I'M NOT THE EMPEROR AT ALL – JUST A PUPPET! AND THAT MONSTER, ROCHA, IS GOING TO EXECUTE MY MOTHER IN THE MORNING!

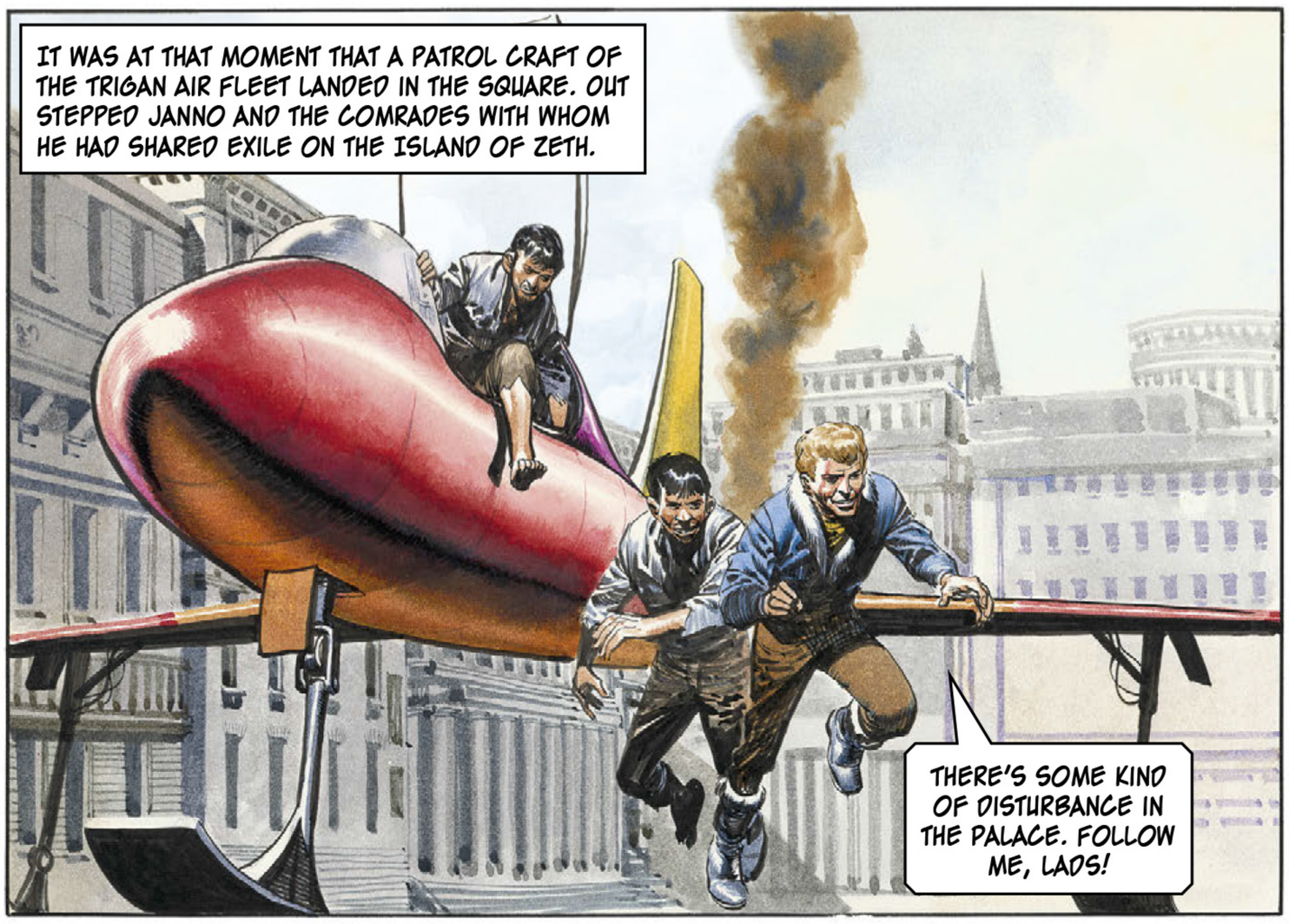
AM I GOING TO LET HIM DO IT?

THE MORNING OF THE FESTIVAL OF VORG DAWNED OVER THE CITY AND CROWDS FLOCKED INTO THE GREAT SQUARE BEFORE THE IMPERIAL PALACE.
SHALL WE SEE THE EMPEROR?
YES, MY SON. HE WILL SPEAK TO US FROM YONDER BALCONY.

DEAFENING CHEERS ROSE FROM THE MULTITUDE AS THE FIGURE OF THEIR EMPEROR APPEARED – FLANKED BY MARSHAL ROCHA AND THE OTHER MILITARY LEADERS.
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!

SILENCE FOR HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, TRIGO THE SECOND, EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS!
CURTLY AND CONTEMPTUOUSLY, HE SNARLED TO HIS PUPPET.
READ THE SPEECH – AND DON'T MAKE ANY MISTAKES!

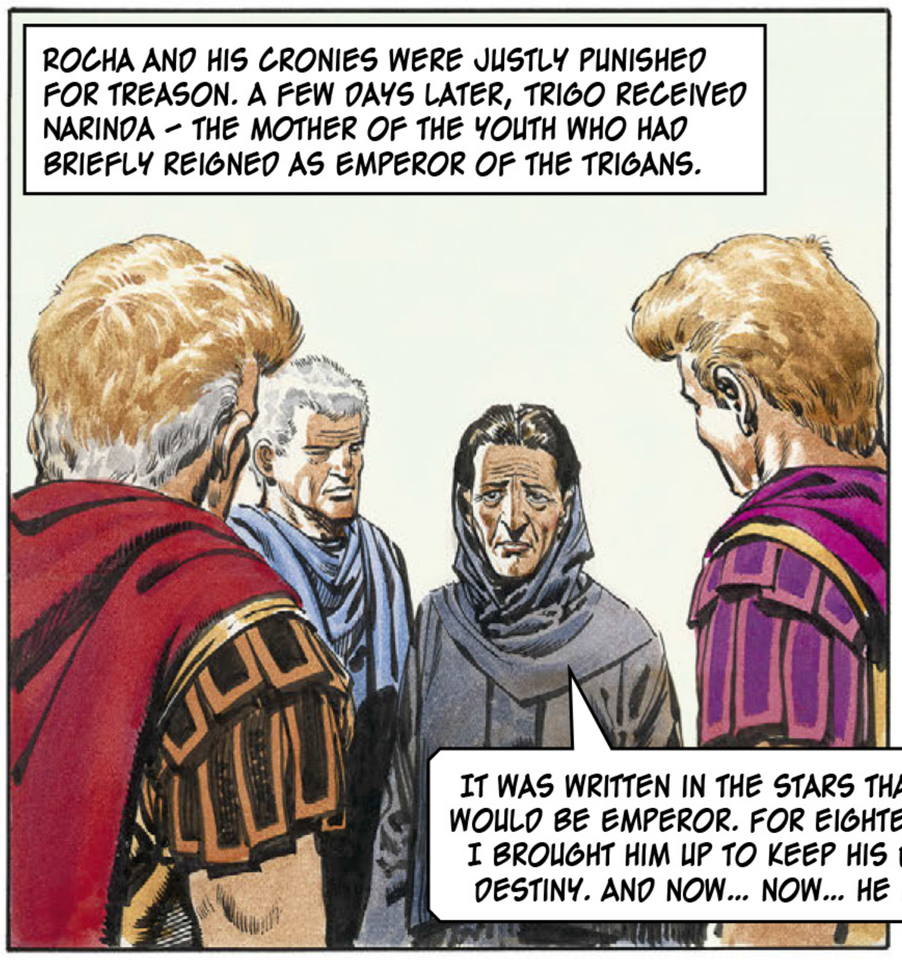
TRIGO THE SECOND'S CLEAR YOUNG VOICE REACHED ACROSS THE CROWDED SQUARE.
MY PEOPLE! I – YOUR EMPEROR – SPEAK TO YOU ON THIS FESTIVAL MORNING...
SUDDENLY, THE YOUNG RULER THREW ASIDE THE PREPARED SPEECH... AND SPOKE FROM HIS HEART.
BUT I AM NOT YOUR EMPEROR! I AM MERELY A PUPPET, SET UPON THE THRONE BY ROCHA AND HIS FOLLOWERS.
THEY WANT ONLY TO ENSLAVE YOU FOR THEIR OWN ENDS! RISE, O PEOPLE OF TRIGAN! RISE AGAINST ROCHA AND HIS MINIONS AND DESTROY THEM!
IN THE SHOCKED SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED, MARSHAL ROCHA DREW A WEAPON – AND FIRED AT THE YOUTH HE HAD SET UPON THE THRONE!
DIE, ACCURSED BRAT!
INSTANTLY, THE CROWDS SWEPT FORWARD, HOWLING IN FURY!
ROCHA HAS SLAIN TRIGO! DESTROY HIM! DOWN WITH ROCHA AND HIS GANG!
THE IMPERIAL GUARD STOOD READY TO DEFEND THE PALACE – BUT THEIR OFFICERS WERE MEMBERS OF THE PATRIOT CONSPIRACY AGAINST ROCHA AND THEY SHOUTED ORDERS WHICH WERE OBEYED!
LOWER YOUR WEAPONS! WE ARE WITH THE PEOPLE!
THE PEOPLE'S CAUSE IS OUR CAUSE!
SO THE GUARDS JOINED FORCES WITH THE MOB AND STORMED INTO THE IMPERIAL PALACE. MARSHAL ROCHA KNEW THAT HIS DREAMS OF POWER WERE SHATTERED. HE GROVELLED LIKE THE COWARD HE WAS!
MERCY, FELLOW CITIZENS! MERCY, I BEG YOU!


IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT THAT A PATROL CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET LANDED IN THE SQUARE. OUT STEPPED JANNO AND THE COMRADES WITH WHOM HE HAD SHARED EXILE ON THE ISLAND OF ZETH.
THERE'S SOME KIND OF DISTURBANCE IN THE PALACE. FOLLOW ME, LADS!

SILENCE FELL AS JANNO ENTERED THE PALACE. HE WAS INSTANTLY RECOGNISED. IT WAS OLD PERIC – NOW FREED FROM CAPTIVITY – WHO ADDRESSED HIM.
JANNO! YOU ARE ALIVE! THEN TRIGO AND YOUR FATHER, ALSO, MAY LIVE!

THE TRUTH WAS WRESTED FROM THE CRINGING ROCHA.
YOU CAST ME AWAY ON AN ISLAND! WHAT DID YOU DO TO THE EMPEROR AND MY FATHER? SPEAK!
THEY– THEY ARE BOTH CAPTIVES IN A DUNGEON BELOW THE PALACE!

SO IT WAS THAT THE EMPEROR TRIGO AND HIS BROTHER BRAG WERE AT LAST FREED FROM WHAT WAS TO HAVE BEEN A LIFELONG CAPTIVITY.
UNCLE... FATHER...!
IMPERIAL MAJESTY!


ROCHA AND HIS CRONIES WERE JUSTLY PUNISHED FOR TREASON. A FEW DAYS LATER, TRIGO RECEIVED NARINDA – THE MOTHER OF THE YOUTH WHO HAD BRIEFLY REIGNED AS EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS.
IT WAS WRITTEN IN THE STARS THAT MY SON WOULD BE EMPEROR. FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS, I BROUGHT HIM UP TO KEEP HIS DATE WITH DESTINY. AND NOW... NOW... HE IS GONE!

TRIGO REPLIED.
MADAME, YOUR SON PERISHED IN A MANNER BEFITTING A TRIGAN EMPEROR! HE DIED FIGHTING FOR HIS PEOPLE'S FREEDOM!

THE BRIEF REIGN OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO II WAS NOT FORGOTTEN. HIS MEMORY WAS HALLOWED BY A STATUE IN THE GREAT SQUARE.

XXIII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

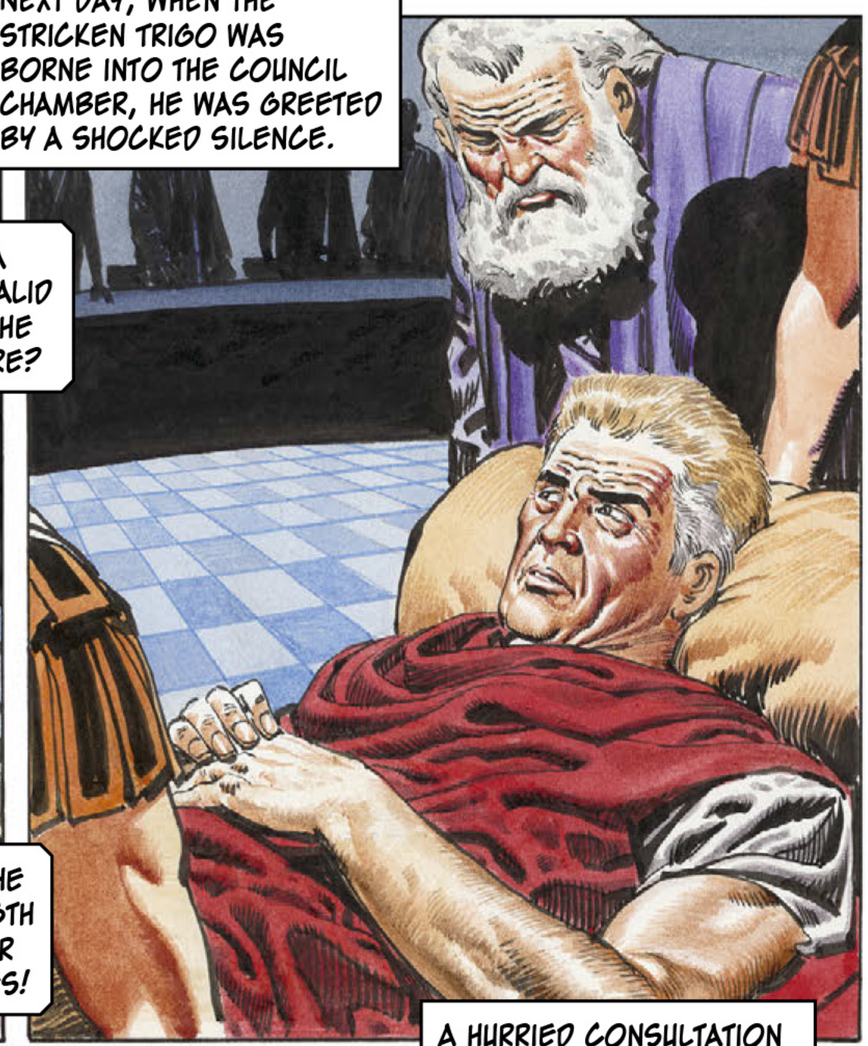
THE FIVE LABOURS OF TRIGO

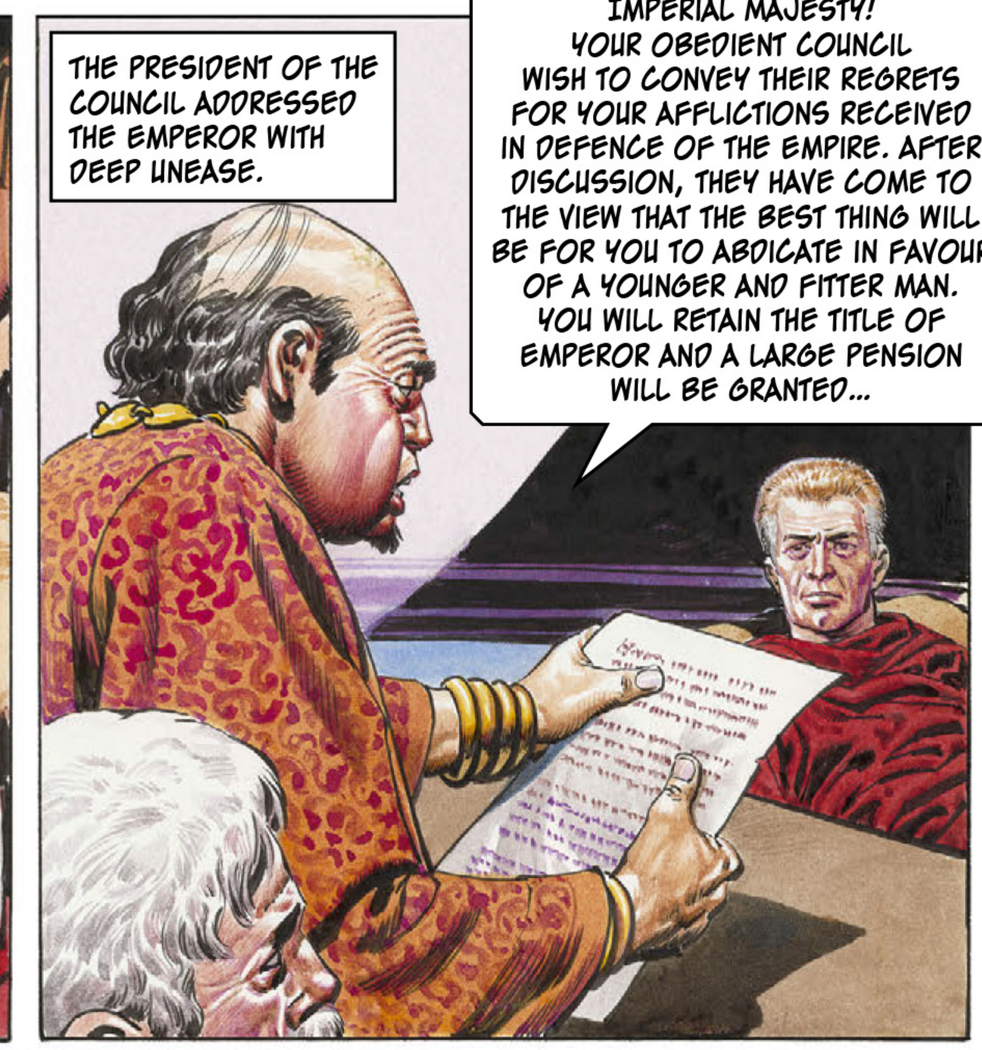
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 439-461

13th June – 14th November 1970

IT WAS IN THE EIGHTEENTH YEAR OF NEVA THAT THE LOKANS – A SUBJECT RACE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE – REBELLED AGAINST THEIR MASTERS. THE EMPEROR TRIGO HIMSELF LED HIS GROUND FORCES INTO BATTLE AGAINST THE REBELS.
ENEMY FIGHTING-CRAFT AHEAD! OPEN FIRE!
IN THE BITTER MELÉE THAT FOLLOWED, TRIGO'S FIGHTING-CRAFT WAS BLOWN UP. FORTUNATELY THE EMPEROR SURVIVED THE BLAST.
INSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY LOKAN INFANTRYMEN, HE FOUGHT BACK WITH HIS BARE HANDS. STILL FIGHTING, HE WAS CUT DOWN.
THE BATTLE ENDED IN VICTORY FOR THE TRIGANS AND THE EMPEROR WAS BORNE – GRAVELY WOUNDED – FROM THE FIELD. IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, THE TOP SURGEONS OF THE EMPIRE FOUGHT FOR HIS LIFE.
IT WAS PERIC, THE SENIOR SCIENTIST OF TRIGAN, WHO REPORTED TO THE GRAND COUNCIL OF THE EMPIRE.
WHAT OF THE EMPEROR?
HE WILL LIVE! ONLY HIS GREAT STRENGTH AND COURAGE BROUGHT HIM THROUGH. BUT YOU WILL FIND HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY GREATLY CHANGED, MY LORDS – HE IS NOW A HELPLESS INVALID!

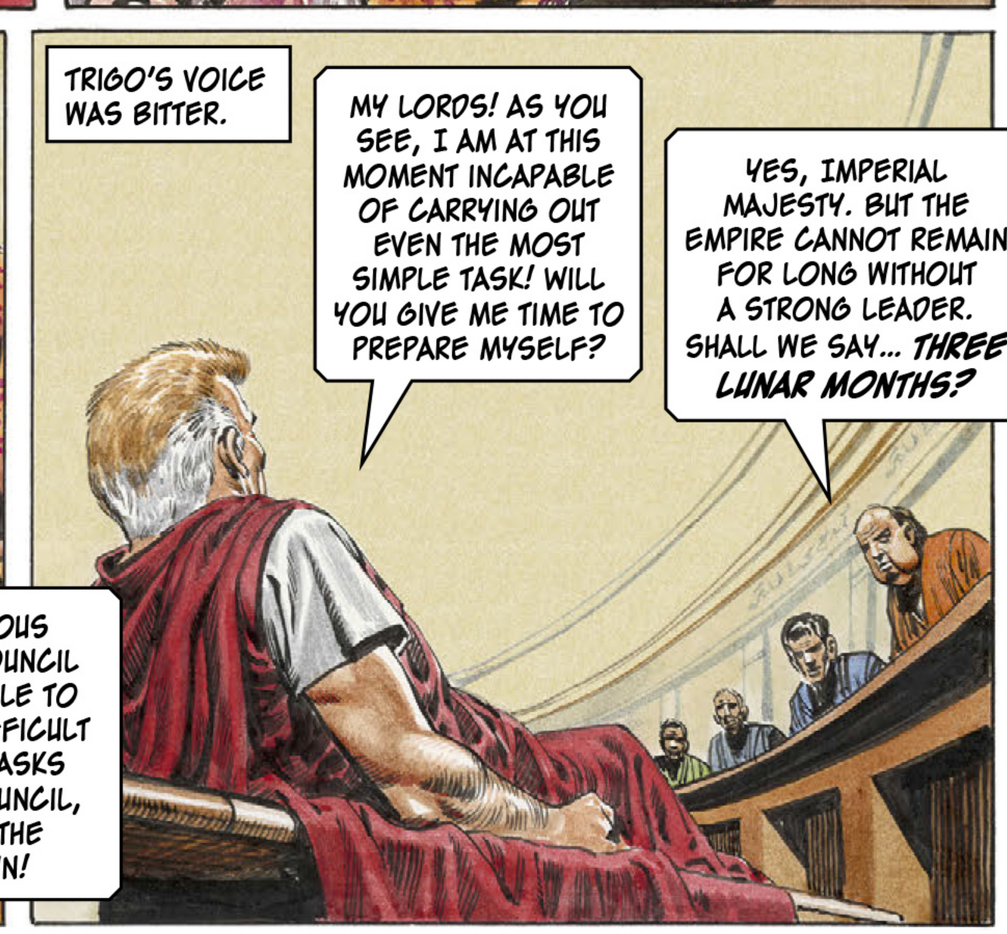
THERE WAS HORRIFIED CONSTERNATION AMONG THE COUNCILLORS.
A HELPLESS INVALID?
HOW CAN A HELPLESS INVALID RULE OVER THE TRIGAN EMPIRE?
ONLY A LEADER IN THE PRIME OF HIS STRENGTH CAN HOLD TOGETHER OUR VAST TERRITORIES!


NEXT DAY, WHEN THE STRICKEN TRIGO WAS BORNE INTO THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, HE WAS GREETED BY A SHOCKED SILENCE.


THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL ADDRESSED THE EMPEROR WITH DEEP UNEASE.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! YOUR OBEDIENT COUNCIL WISH TO CONVEY THEIR REGRETS FOR YOUR AFFLICTIONS RECEIVED IN DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE. AFTER DISCUSSION, THEY HAVE COME TO THE VIEW THAT THE BEST THING WILL BE FOR YOU TO ABDICATE IN FAVOUR OF A YOUNGER AND FITTER MAN. YOU WILL RETAIN THE TITLE OF EMPEROR AND A LARGE PENSION WILL BE GRANTED...

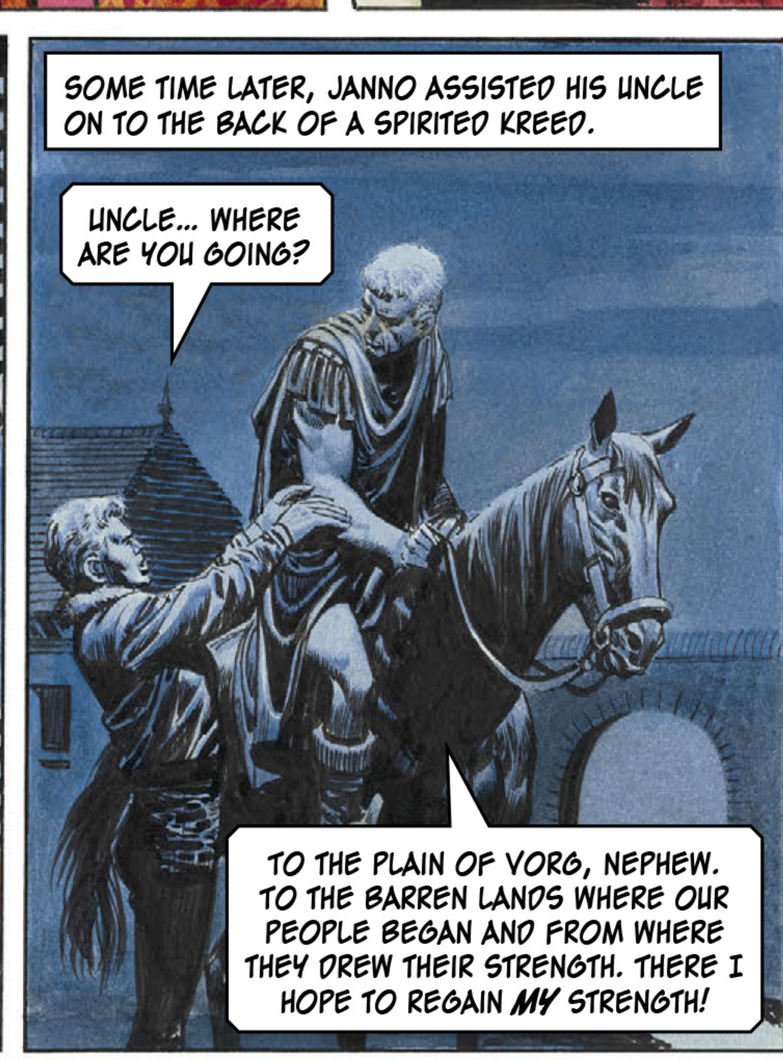
TRIGO'S COMMANDING VOICE BROKE IN.
ENOUGH OF THAT! WILL MY "OBEDIENT COUNCIL" BE SO GOOD AS TO GIVE ME THE TERMS ON WHICH THEY WILL ALLOW ME TO REMAIN EMPEROR?
ER- I WILL CONFER WITH THEM, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!

A HURRIED CONSULTATION - AND THEN THE ANSWER...
IT IS THE UNANIMOUS OPINION OF THE COUNCIL THAT IF YOU ARE ABLE TO CARRY OUT FIVE DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS TASKS CHOSEN BY THE COUNCIL, YOU CAN RETAIN THE IMPERIAL CROWN!

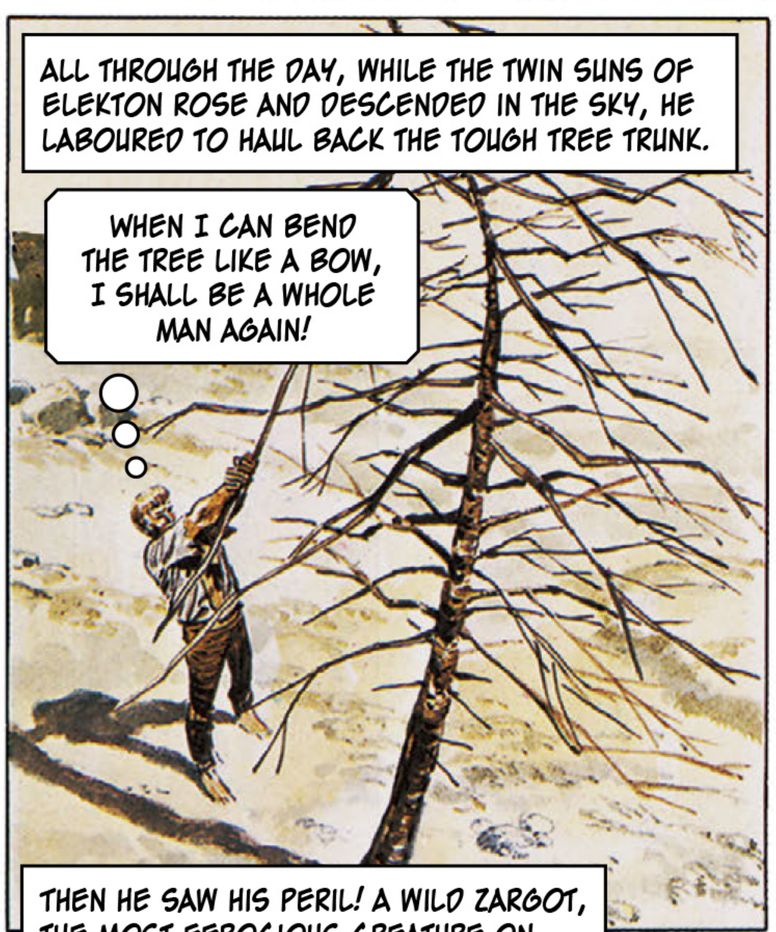

TRIGO'S VOICE WAS BITTER.
MY LORDS! AS YOU SEE, I AM AT THIS MOMENT INCAPABLE OF CARRYING OUT EVEN THE MOST SIMPLE TASK! WILL YOU GIVE ME TIME TO PREPARE MYSELF?
YES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. BUT THE EMPIRE CANNOT REMAIN FOR LONG WITHOUT A STRONG LEADER. SHALL WE SAY... THREE LUNAR MONTHS?

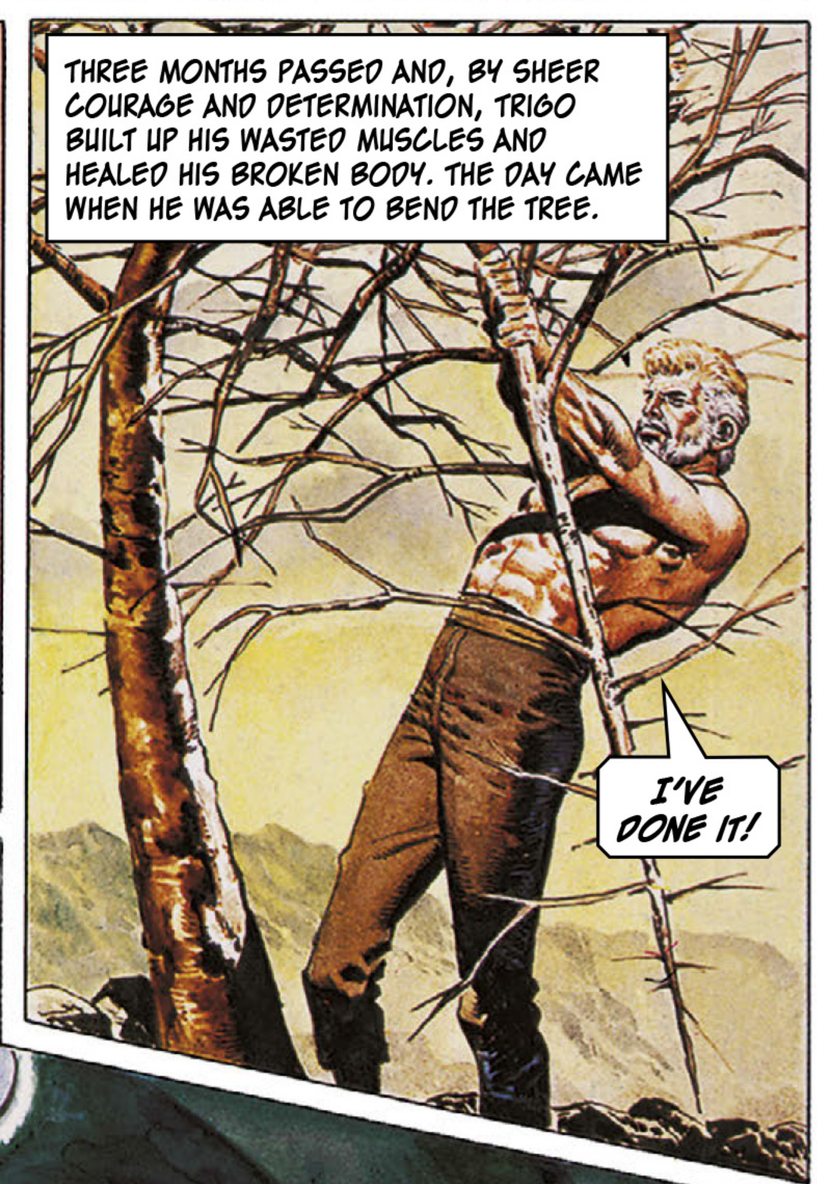
THE EMPEROR REPLIED IN STIRRING TONES.
AGREED! IN THREE MONTHS TIME I SHALL RETURN - TO TAKE ON THE FIRST OF THE FIVE TASKS YOU DEMAND THAT I PERFORM.

THAT NIGHT, TRIGO SUMMONED HIS NEPHEW, JANNO, TO HIS BEDSIDE.
JANNO! SADDLE A POWERFUL KREED. WHEN YOU'VE DONE THAT, I WANT YOU TO CARRY ME DOWN TO THE COURTYARD WHERE THE KREED IS WAITING.
BUT- UNCLE...
DO AS I SAY, BOY!


SOME TIME LATER, JANNO ASSISTED HIS UNCLE ON TO THE BACK OF A SPIRITED KREED.
UNCLE... WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO THE PLAIN OF VORG, NEPHEW. TO THE BARREN LANDS WHERE OUR PEOPLE BEGAN AND FROM WHERE THEY DREW THEIR STRENGTH. THERE I HOPE TO REGAIN MY STRENGTH!

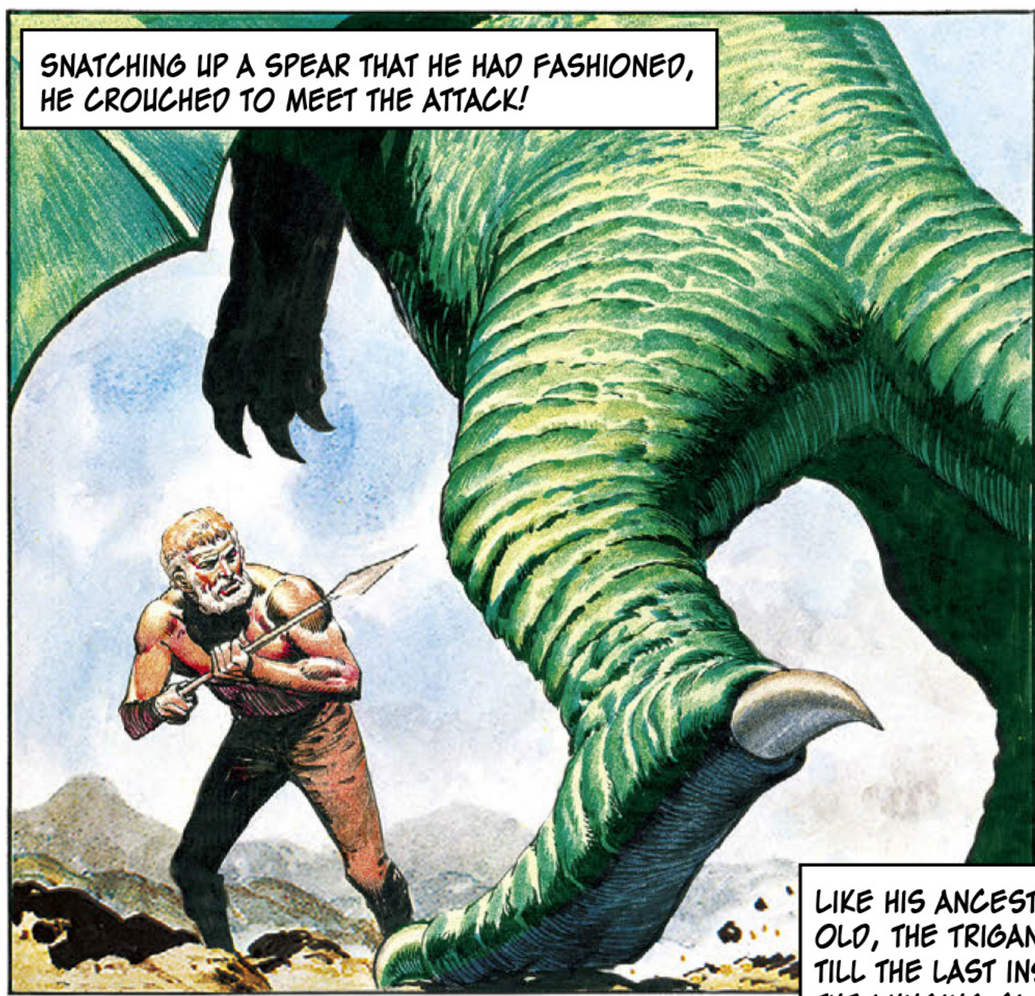
AND HE RODE OUT OF THE CITY - TOWARDS THE WILDERNESS OF VORG.

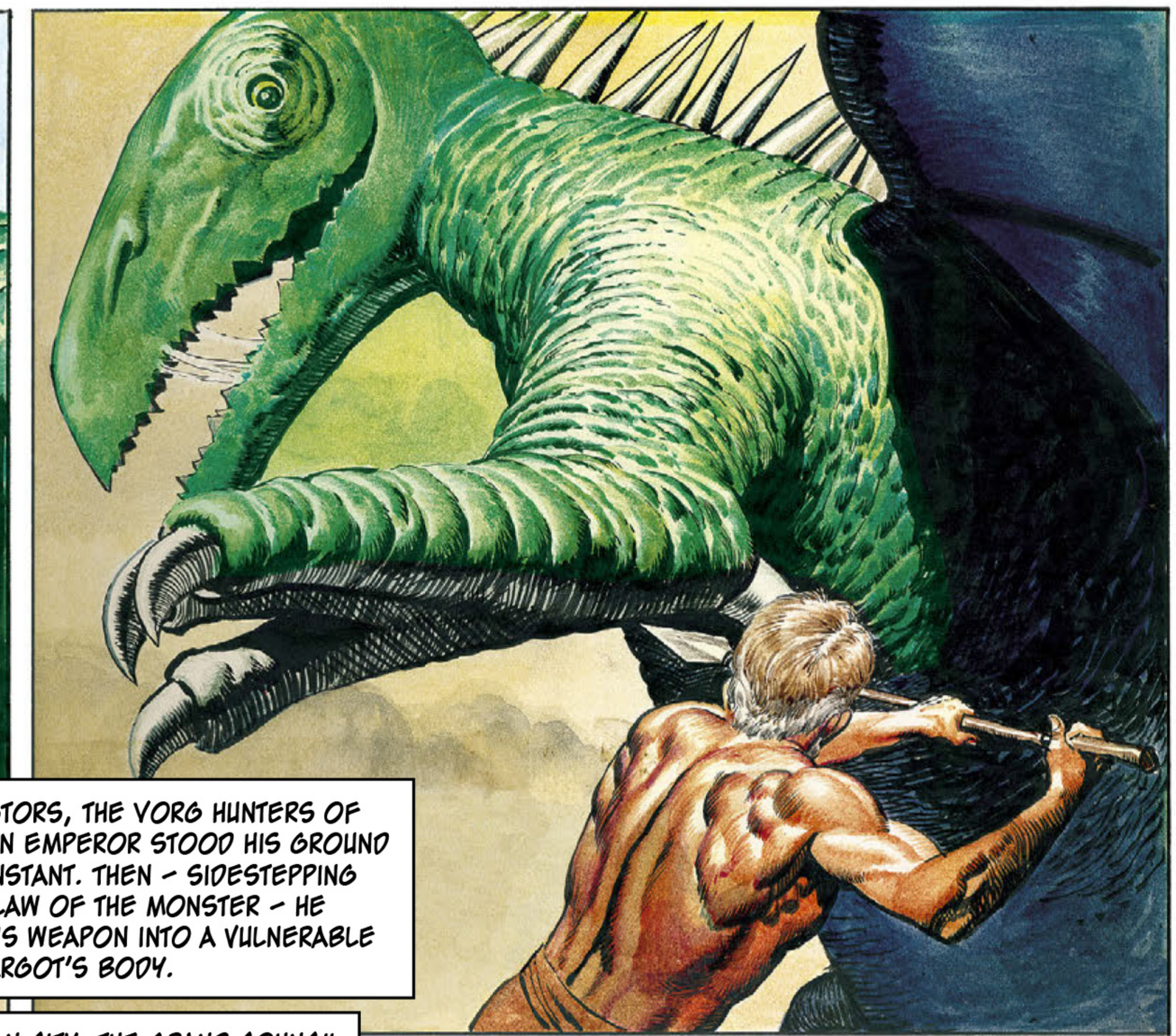




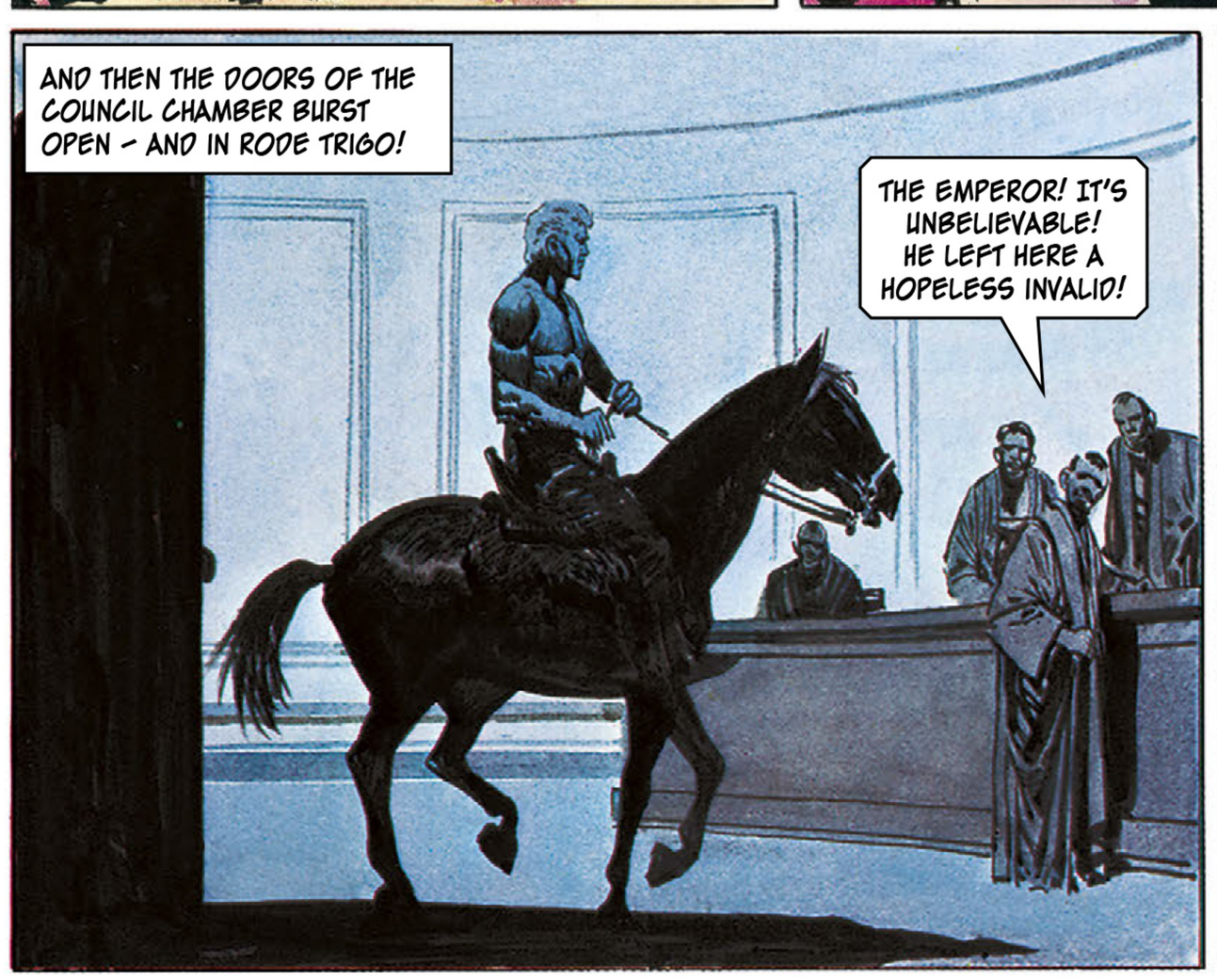
THEN HE SAW HIS PERIL! A WILD ZARGOT, THE MOST FEROCIOUS CREATURE ON ELEKTON!

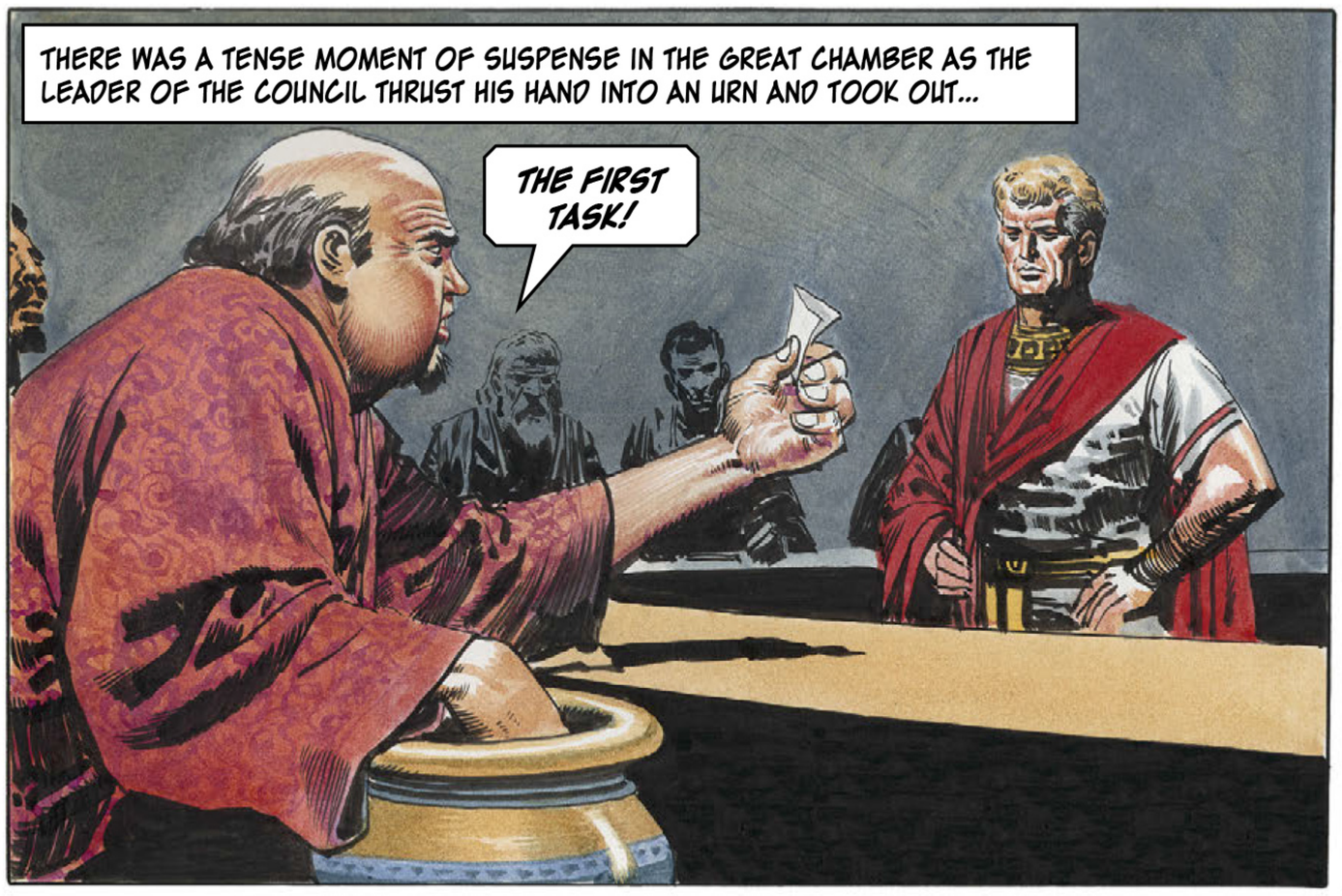
BY ALL THE STARS!





LIKE HIS ANCESTORS, THE VORG HUNTERS OF OLD, THE TRIGAN EMPEROR STOOD HIS GROUND TILL THE LAST INSTANT. THEN – SIDESTEPPING THE LUNGING CLAW OF THE MONSTER – HE DROVE HOME HIS WEAPON INTO A VULNERABLE PART OF THE ZARGOT'S BODY.

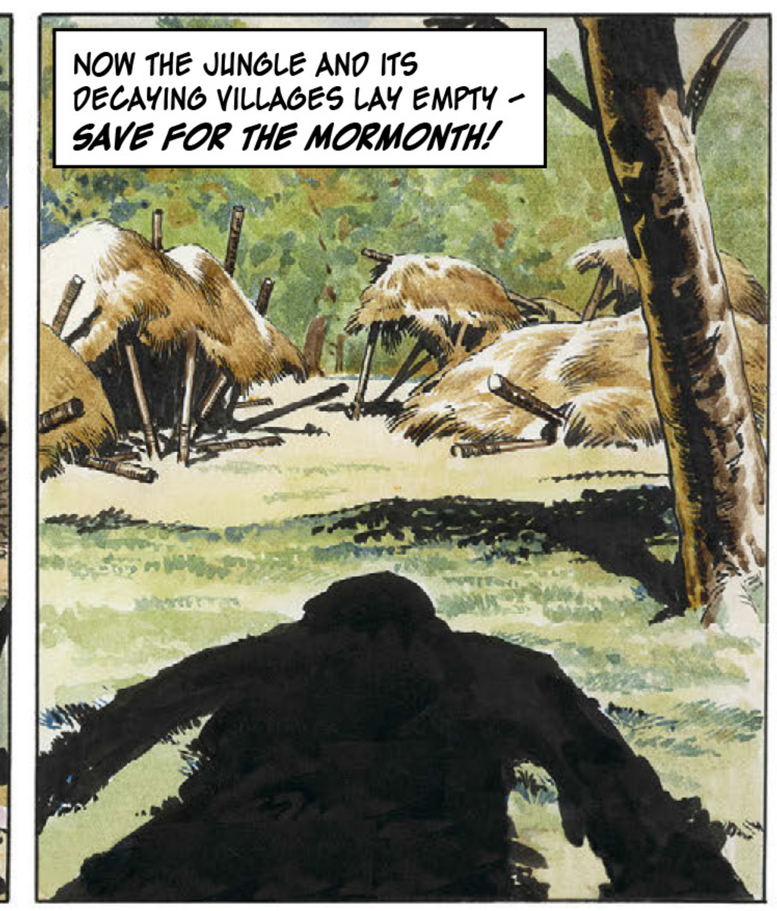


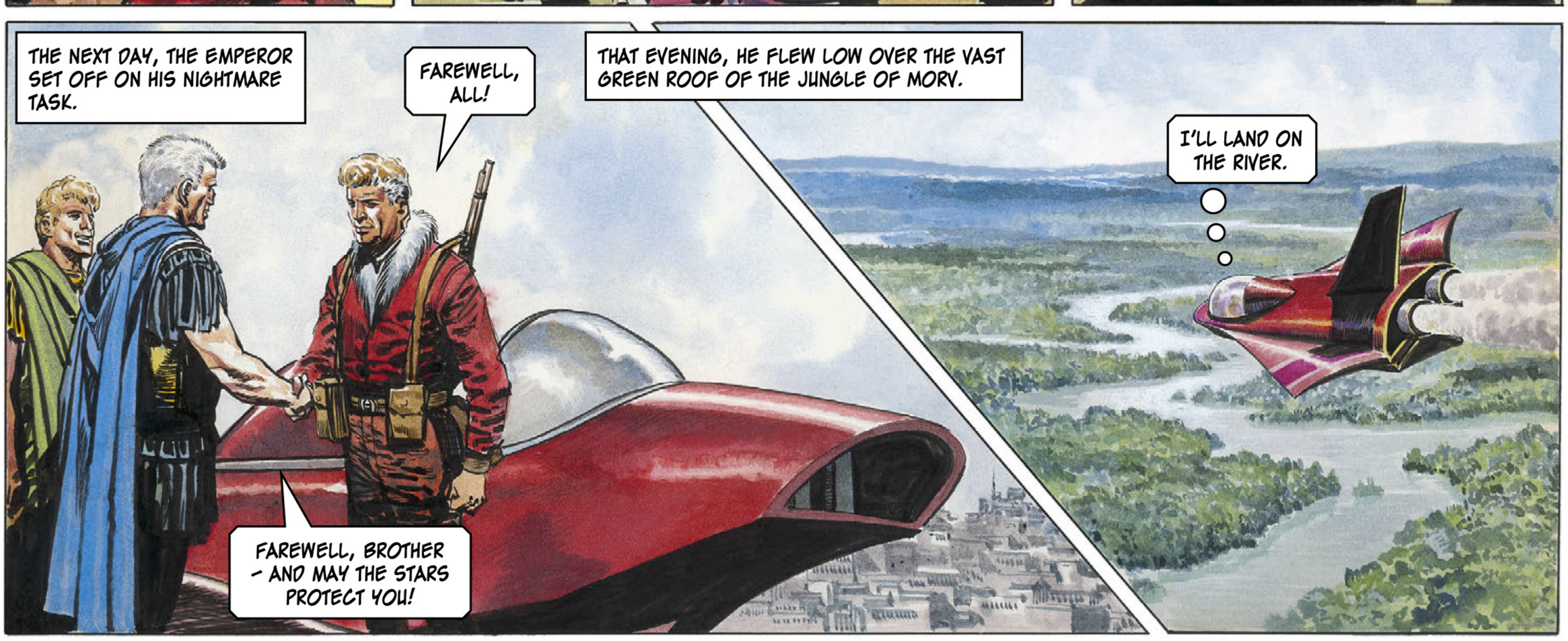

THERE WAS A TENSE MOMENT OF SUSPENSE IN THE GREAT CHAMBER AS THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL THRUST HIS HAND INTO AN URN AND TOOK OUT...
THE FIRST TASK!

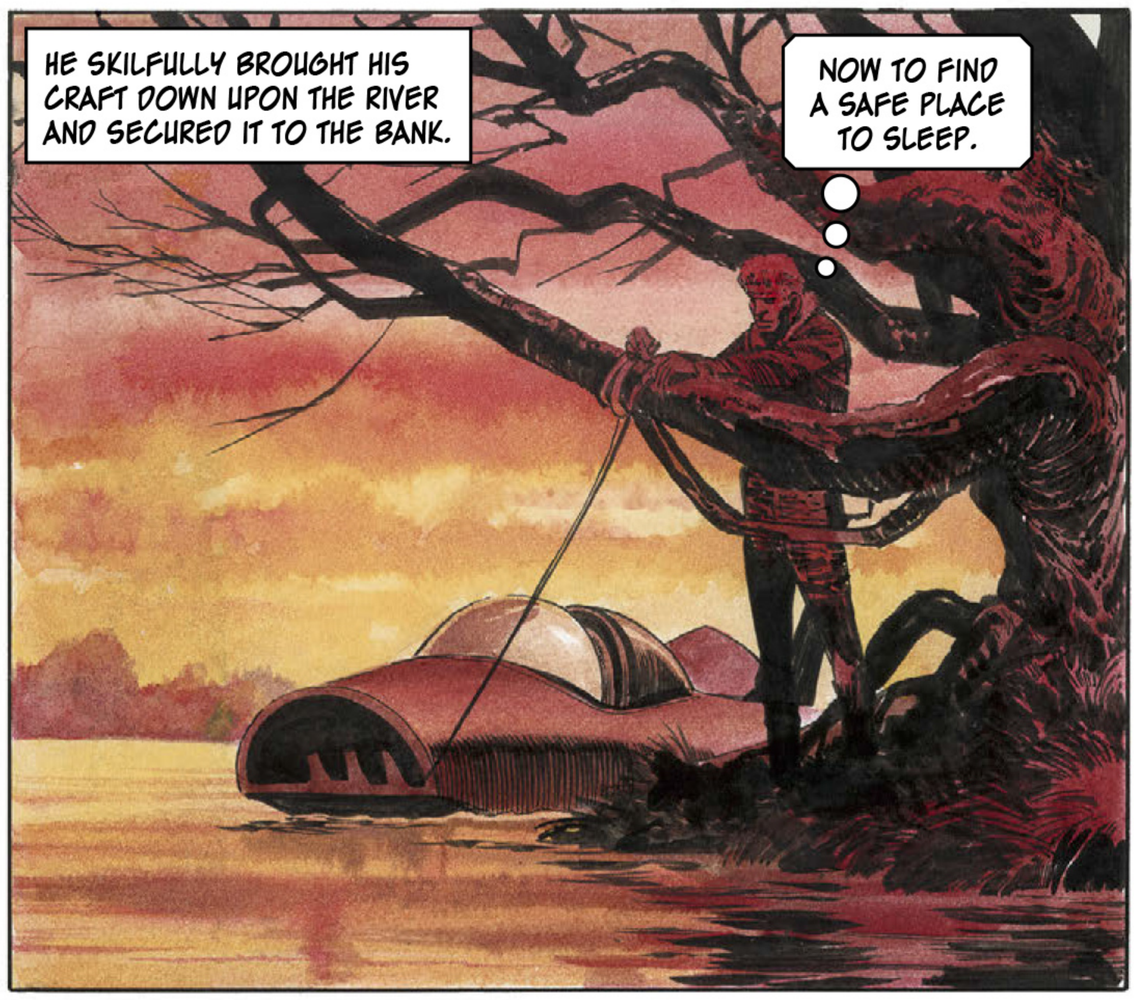
AT LEAST TWO MEMBERS OF THE GRAND COUNCIL WERE HOSTILE TOWARDS THE EMPEROR.
I CANNOT BELIEVE HE IS AS STRONG IN BODY AND WILL AS HE APPEARS!
NO! THREE MONTHS AGO, HE WAS AS HELPLESS AS A CHILD! I WAGER HE'LL FAIL AT THE FIRST TASK!

TRIGO READ ALOUD HIS FIRST TASK IN AN AWESTRUCK VOICE...
"YOU WILL CAPTURE AND BRING BACK ALIVE- THE MORMONTH OF MORV!"

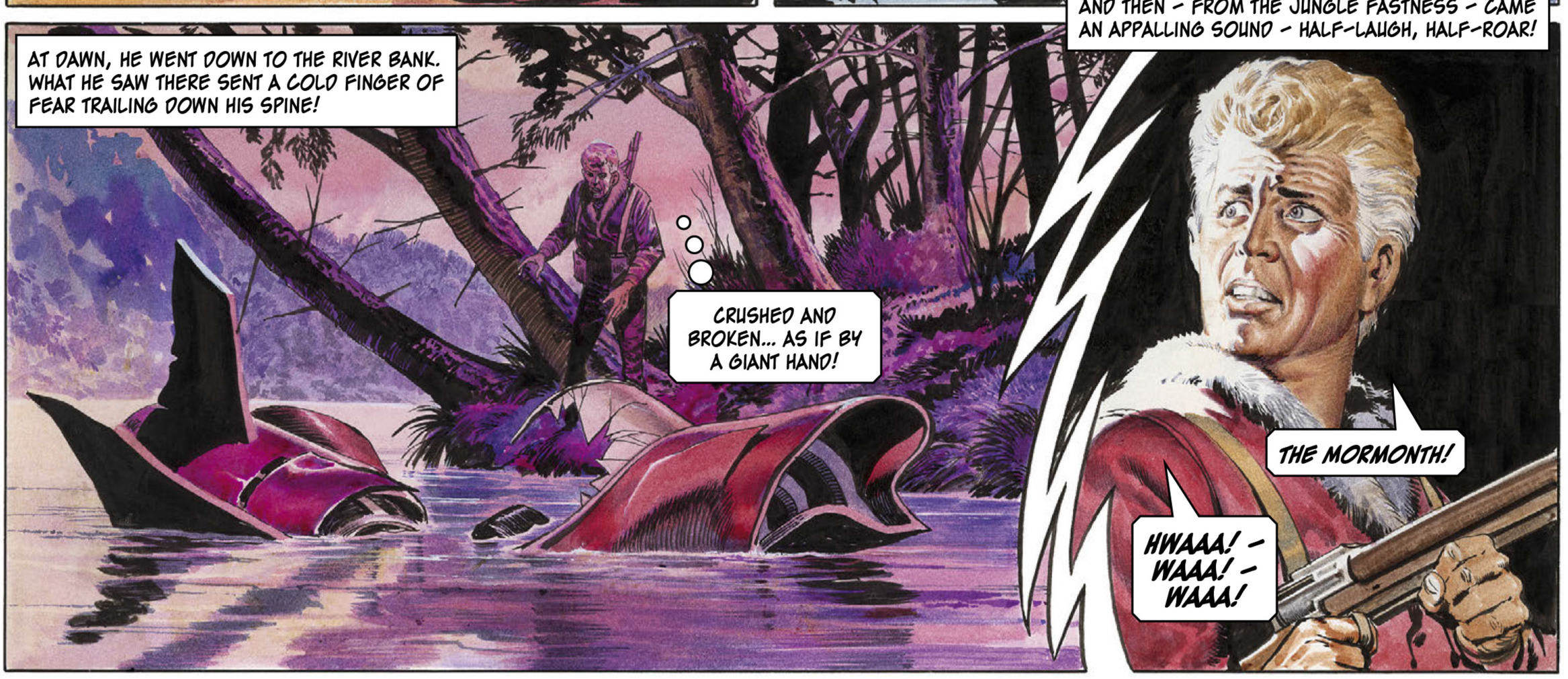
THE MORMONTH OF MORV! THE VERY NAME WAS ENOUGH TO CAUSE A SHUDDER THROUGHOUT ELEKTON. THE MORMONTH WAS A HALF-LEGENDARY CREATURE THAT HAD CLEARED THE JUNGLE OF MORV OF ALL ITS INHABITANTS.
FLEE! FLEE! THE MORMONTH IS COMING!


NOW THE JUNGLE AND ITS DECAYING VILLAGES LAY EMPTY - SAVE FOR THE MORMONTH!


THE NEXT DAY, THE EMPEROR SET OFF ON HIS NIGHTMARE TASK.
FAREWELL, ALL!
FAREWELL, BROTHER - AND MAY THE STARS PROTECT YOU!
THAT EVENING, HE FLEW LOW OVER THE VAST GREEN ROOF OF THE JUNGLE OF MORV.
I'LL LAND ON THE RIVER.


HE SKILFULLY BROUGHT HIS CRAFT DOWN UPON THE RIVER AND SECURED IT TO THE BANK.
NOW TO FIND A SAFE PLACE TO SLEEP.

HIS CHOICE WAS AN UNCOMFORTABLE PERCH IN THE UPPERMOST BRANCHES OF A HIGH TREE. WEAPON IN HAND, HE SETTLED DOWN TO SLEEP.
TOMORROW, I MAKE MY PREPARATIONS TO CATCH THE MORMONTH!


AT DAWN, HE WENT DOWN TO THE RIVER BANK. WHAT HE SAW THERE SENT A COLD FINGER OF FEAR TRAILING DOWN HIS SPINE!
CRUSHED AND BROKEN... AS IF BY A GIANT HAND!
AND THEN – FROM THE JUNGLE FASTNESS – CAME AN APPALLING SOUND – HALF-LAUGH, HALF-ROAR!
THE MORMONTH!
HWAAA! – WAAA! – WAAA!

STEELING HIS NERVES, TRIGO STARTED TO DIG A DEEP PIT.

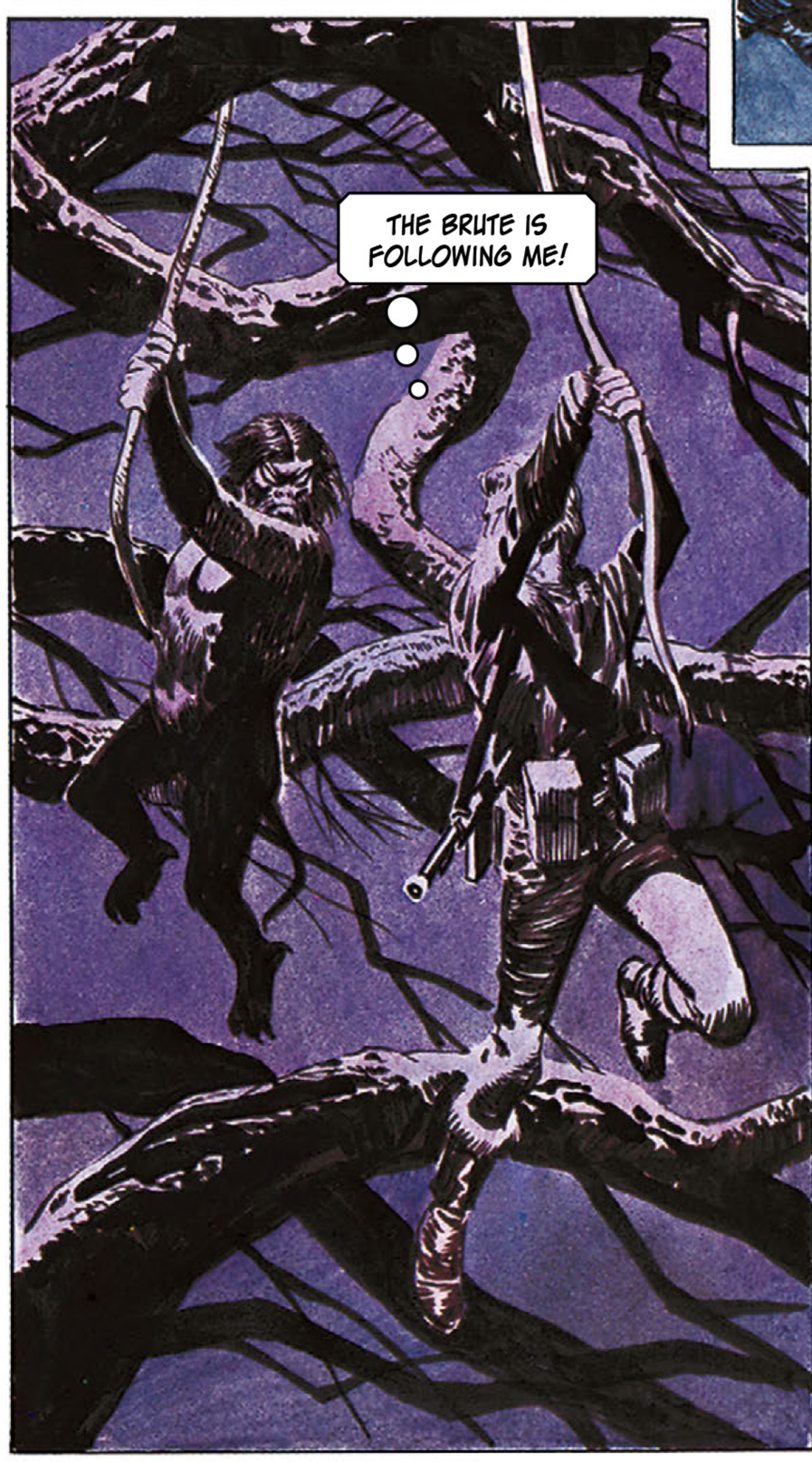
THE TASK TOOK HIM ALL DAY. WHEN NIGHT FELL, HE CLIMBED A TREE TO KEEP WATCH OVER THE PIT, WHICH HE HAD CUNNINGLY COVERED WITH LEAVES AND BRANCHES.
IF IT RETURNS TO WHERE IT CAME LAST NIGHT, IT WILL HAVE TO CROSS THAT CLEARING!

BUT – THE WATCHER HIMSELF WAS WATCHED!

SUDDENLY, THE JUNGLE SILENCE WAS SPLIT BY A TERRIFYING CRY. TRIGO LOOKED UP...
AAAAAH! BY ALL THE STARS!

BY THE LIGHT OF ELEKTON'S TWIN MOONS, HE SAW A NIGHTMARE SHAPE LOOMING HIGH ABOVE HIM.
HWAAAA! - WAAA! - WAAAA!

SUDDEN DEATH CAME HURTLING DOWN - AND IN THAT SAME INSTANT, TRIGO LEAPT!

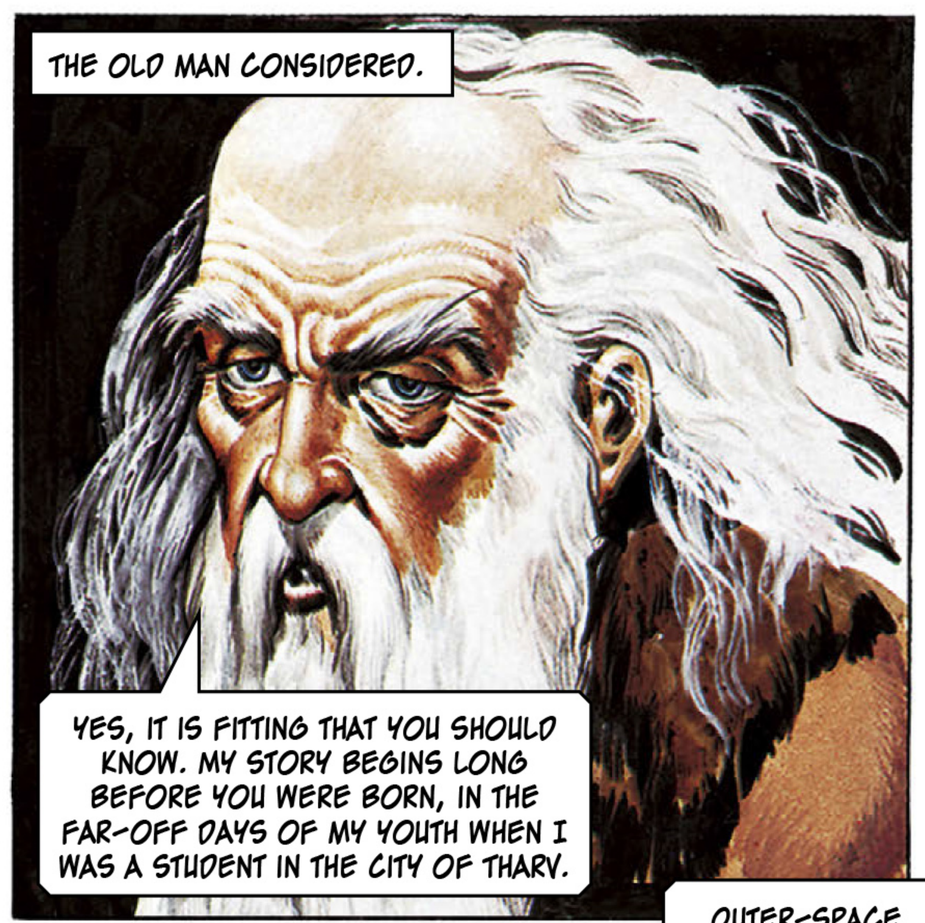

THE BRUTE IS FOLLOWING ME!

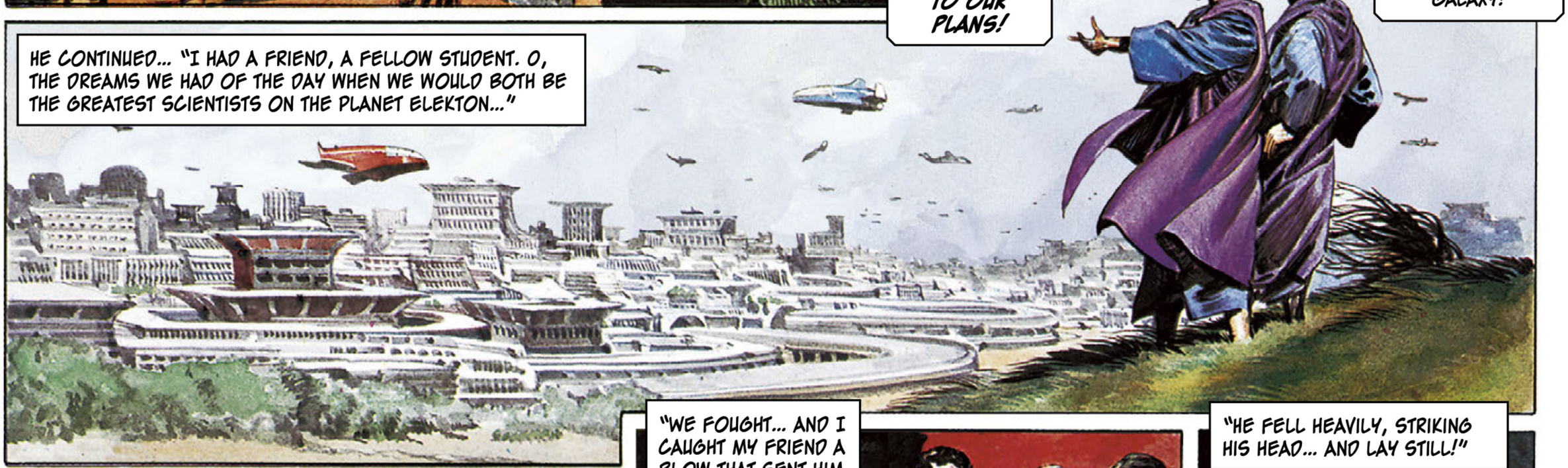
JAWS AGAPE AND SLIT EYES BLAZING, THE MORMONTH OF MORV CAME STRAIGHT AT ITS PREY!
HWAAAAA - WAAAAA!

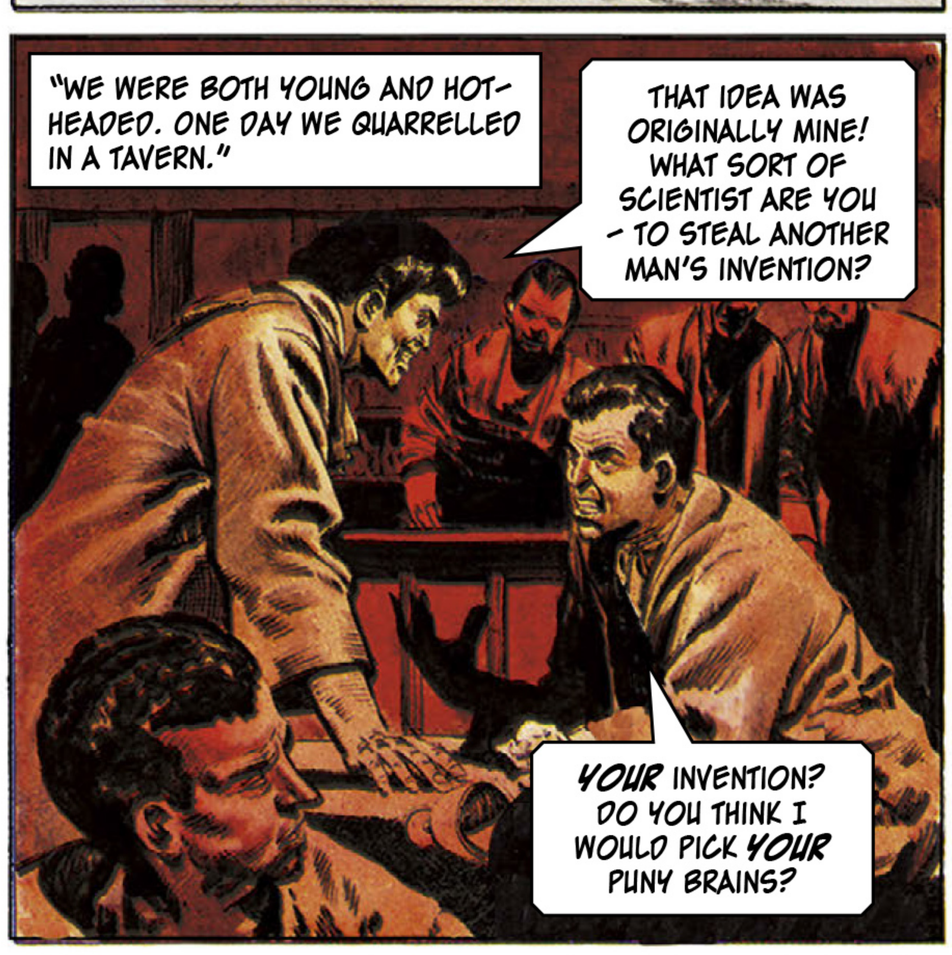
TRIGO TOOK RAPID AIM - AND FIRED!

THE MORMONTH FELL WITH A SCREECH THAT AWAKENED THE ECHOES OF THE JUNGLE.
YEEEEEEEE – AAAAAAGH!
IT CRASHED TO THE GROUND AND LAY STILL. TRIGO DESCENDED AND EXAMINED IT.
IT LIVES! BEFORE THE BRUTE RECOVERS ITS SENSES I WILL SECURE IT!
WORKING WITH FRANTIC SPEED, HE FASHIONED A HURDLE OF HEAVY BRANCHES TO WHICH HE BOUND THE LIMP FORM OF THE JUNGLE MONSTER. DAWN WAS BREAKING AS HE FINISHED THE TASK.
NEXT, BY MEANS OF ROLLERS AND PULLEYS, I WILL DRAG IT TO THE RIVER... READY FOR THE JOURNEY BACK TO CIVILISATION.
SUDDENLY, TRIGO'S WORLD DISSOLVED IN A SEA OF SEARING PAIN!
UUHHH!
THE SUNS WERE HIGH IN THE SKY WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES AGAIN. A STRANGE FIGURE WAS SQUATTING OPPOSITE HIM.
BY ALL THE DEMONS OF DAVELI... WHO ARE YOU?
WHO I AM IS OF NO ACCOUNT TO YOU! WHAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU HAVE DISTURBED MY PEACE AND SOLITUDE AND FOR THAT YOU WILL PERISH!
THE OLD MAN MADE A GESTURE – AND...
KILL, MORMONTH... KILL!

WITH THE MORMONTH'S HOT BREATH FANNING HIS FACE, TRIGO CRIED OUT DESPERATELY...
WAIT! IF I AM TO DIE, AT LEAST TELL ME WHO YOU ARE AND HOW IT IS THAT YOU HAVE POWER OVER THIS CREATURE!


THE OLD MAN CONSIDERED.
YES, IT IS FITTING THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW. MY STORY BEGINS LONG BEFORE YOU WERE BORN, IN THE FAR-OFF DAYS OF MY YOUTH WHEN I WAS A STUDENT IN THE CITY OF THARV.


HE CONTINUED... "I HAD A FRIEND, A FELLOW STUDENT. O, THE DREAMS WE HAD OF THE DAY WHEN WE WOULD BOTH BE THE GREATEST SCIENTISTS ON THE PLANET ELEKTON..."
ONE DAY, THARV WILL BE REBUILT TO OUR PLANS!
OUTER-SPACE CRAFT OF OUR DESIGN WILL RISE FROM THE CITY AND JOURNEY TO THE ENDS OF THE GALAXY!


"WE WERE BOTH YOUNG AND HOT-HEADED. ONE DAY WE QUARRELLED IN A TAVERN."
THAT IDEA WAS ORIGINALLY MINE! WHAT SORT OF SCIENTIST ARE YOU - TO STEAL ANOTHER MAN'S INVENTION?
YOUR INVENTION? DO YOU THINK I WOULD PICK YOUR PUNY BRAINS?

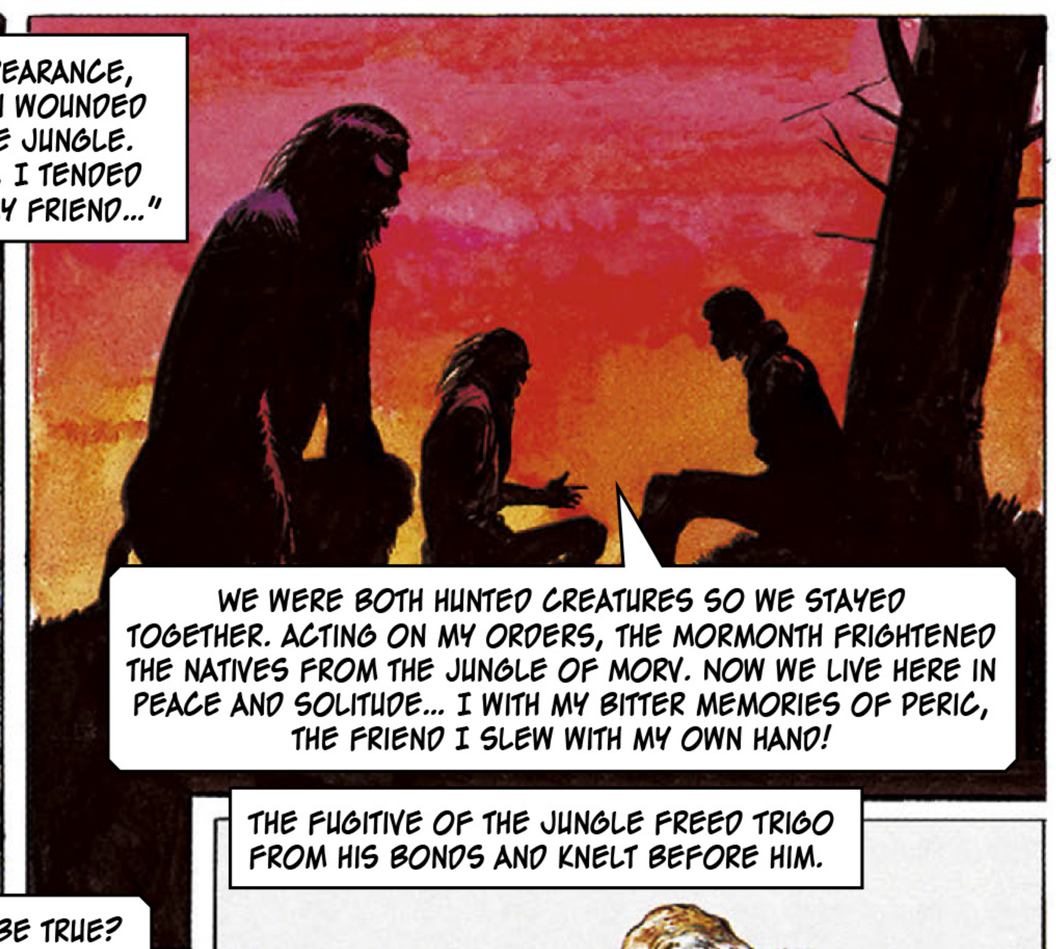
"WE FOUGHT... AND I CAUGHT MY FRIEND A BLOW THAT SENT HIM REELING..."
STOP THAT! I'LL HAVE NO BRAWLING HERE!
AAAAAAAAGH!

"HE FELL HEAVILY, STRIKING HIS HEAD... AND LAY STILL!"
YOU... YOU'VE KILLED HIM! SOMEONE CALL THE CITY GUARDS!
NO!... NO!

"I FLED FROM THE CITY WITH THE LAW AT MY HEELS. MANY LUNAR MONTHS LATER, I FOUND REFUGE IN THE JUNGLE OF MORV..."
I- I CAN GO NO FURTHER!

"IT WAS THERE THAT I CAME FACE TO FACE WITH... THE MORMONTH!
HWAAAAAA! - WAAAAAA!
AAAAAAH!

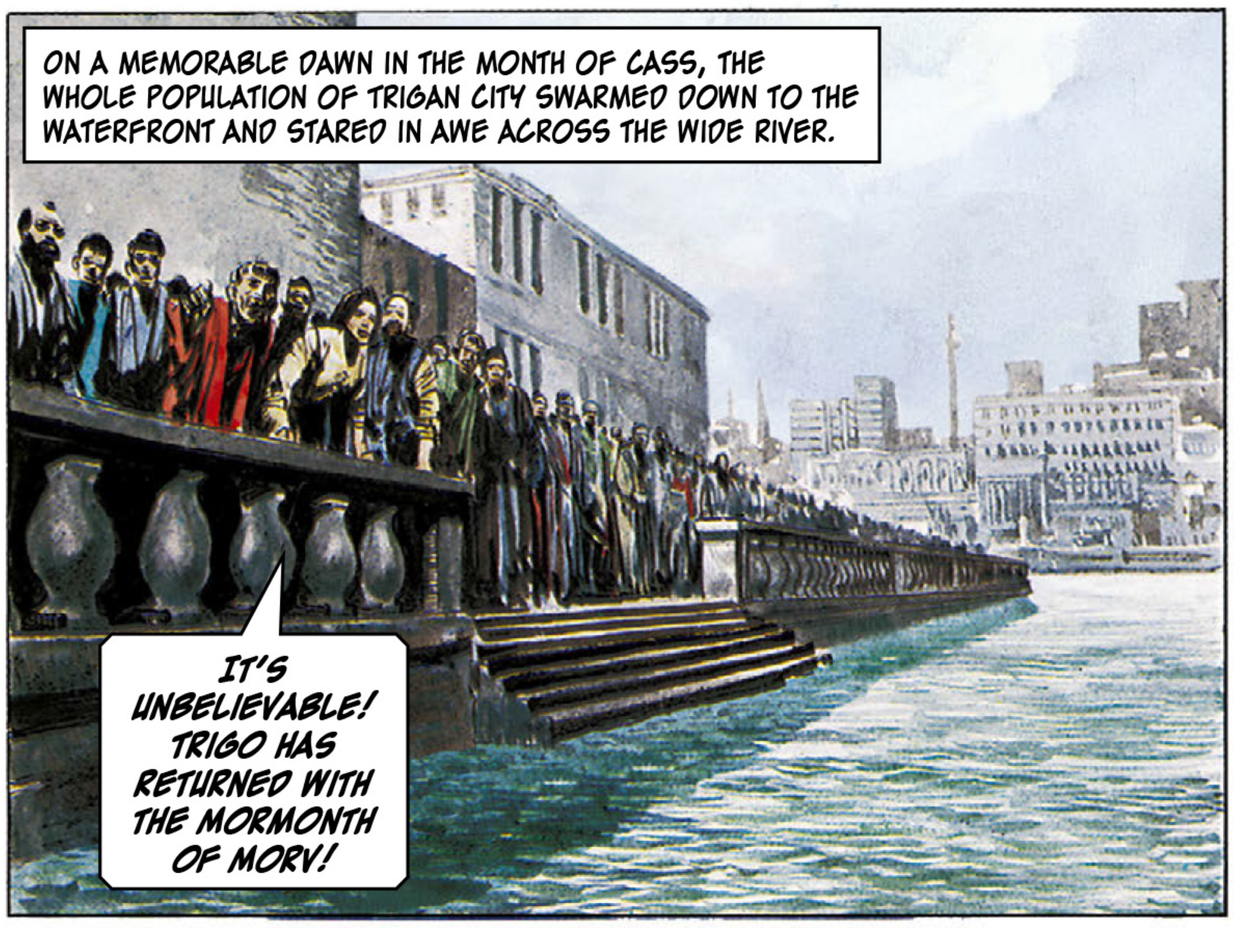
"DESPITE THE CREATURE'S FEARFUL APPEARANCE, I FOUND IT TO BE GENTLE. IT HAD BEEN WOUNDED BY AN ARROW, SHOT BY A NATIVE OF THE JUNGLE. EMPLOYING WHAT MEDICAL SKILL I HAD, I TENDED THE WOUND. THE MORMONTH BECAME MY FRIEND..."


WE WERE BOTH HUNTED CREATURES SO WE STAYED TOGETHER. ACTING ON MY ORDERS, THE MORMONTH FRIGHTENED THE NATIVES FROM THE JUNGLE OF MORV. NOW WE LIVE HERE IN PEACE AND SOLITUDE... I WITH MY BITTER MEMORIES OF PERIC, THE FRIEND I SLEW WITH MY OWN HAND!

TRIGO GAVE A START.
PERIC? DID YOU SAY PERIC?
YES... WHAT OF IT?
BUT PERIC LIVES! PERIC, THE FORMER STUDENT OF THARV, IS NOW INDEED THE GREATEST SCIENTIST ON ELEKTON AND MY OLDEST FRIEND AND ADVISOR!

THE OLD MAN ROSE, HIS FACE FILLED WITH WONDER.
CAN THIS BE TRUE? THEN WHO ARE YOU, STRANGER?
I AM TRIGO, EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS!

THE FUGITIVE OF THE JUNGLE FREED TRIGO FROM HIS BONDS AND KNELT BEFORE HIM.
MIGHTY ONE! YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME GREAT JOY. WHAT CAN I DO TO REPAY YOU?
THERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO, OLD MAN... LISTEN...

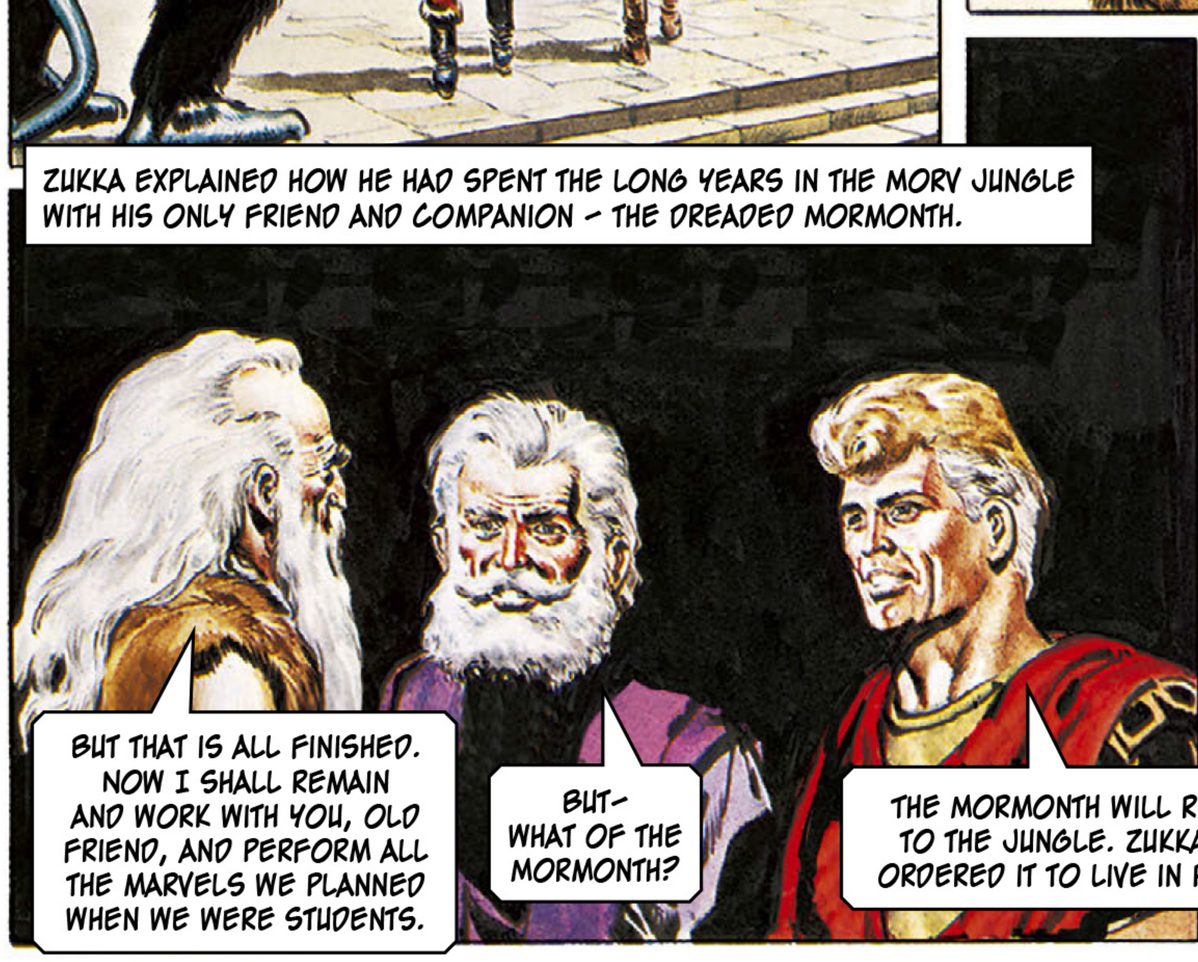

ON A MEMORABLE DAWN IN THE MONTH OF CASS, THE WHOLE POPULATION OF TRIGAN CITY SWARMED DOWN TO THE WATERFRONT AND STARED IN AWE ACROSS THE WIDE RIVER.
IT'S UNBELIEVABLE! TRIGO HAS RETURNED WITH THE MORMONTH OF MORV!

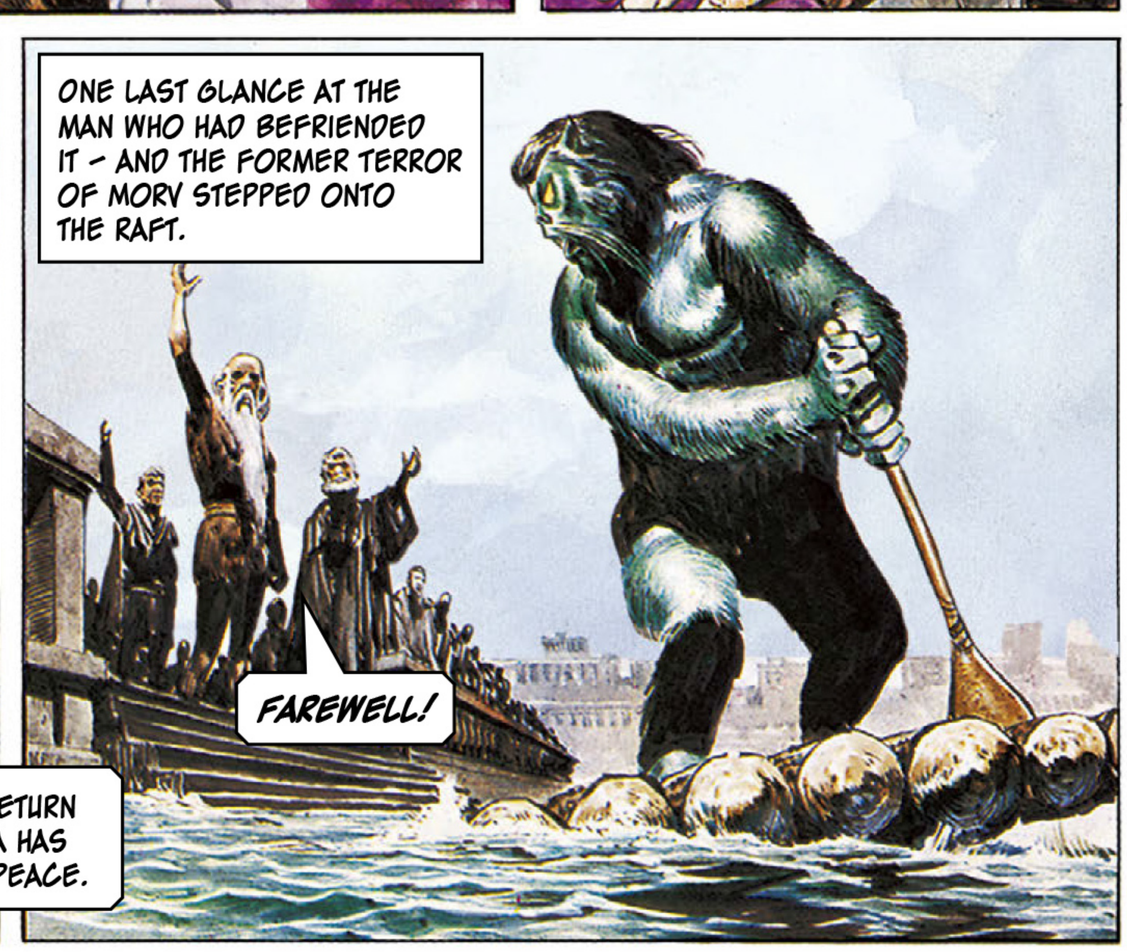
BORNE ON THE SWIFT-FLOWING CURRENT WAS A RAFT - AND ON IT WERE TRIGO, THE OLD MAN AND THE LOOMING FIGURE OF A GREAT BEAST!

THE CROWDS BACKED AWAY FEARFULLY AS THE TRIO STEPPED ASHORE. TRIGO CALLED OUT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE GRAND COUNCIL.
BEHOLD! I DELIVER THE MORMONTH AS ORDERED!

IT WAS THEN THAT TRIGO'S BEARDED OLD COMPANION ESPIED THE SCIENTIST, PERIC, IN THE CROWD.
THIS IS THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE! PERIC, OLD FRIEND, DO YOU NOT REMEMBER ME? CALL BACK TO MIND YOUR STUDENT DAYS IN THARV...
CAN IT BE? YES, IT IS... ZUKKA!

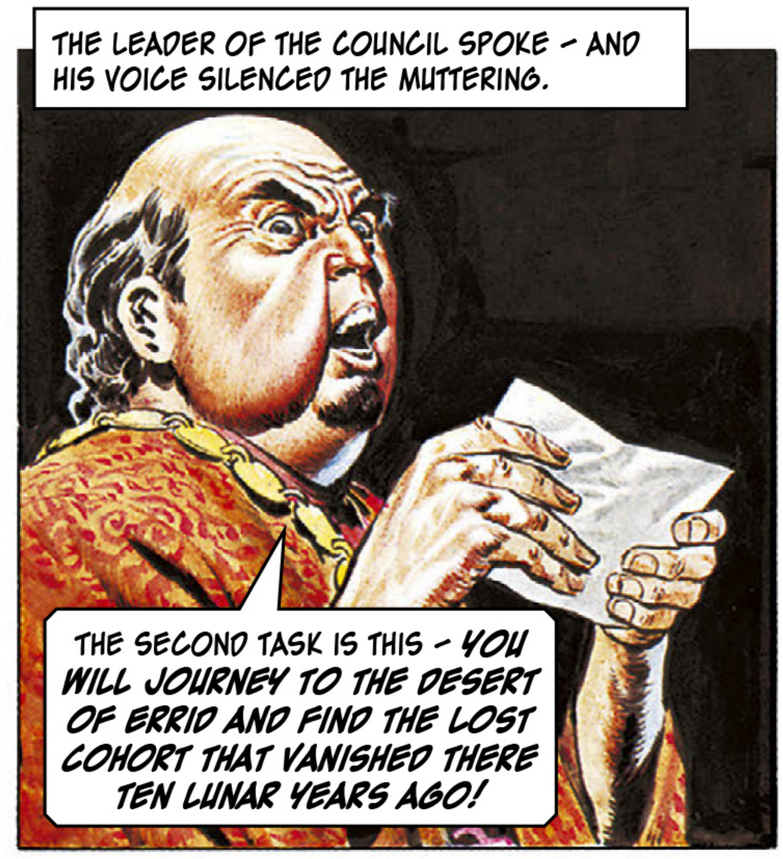
THE TWO WERE RE-UNITED AFTER HALF A LIFETIME OF TRAGIC MISUNDERSTANDING.
THAT FOOLISH QUARREL WE HAD - IT WAS ALL MY FAULT!
NO! IT WAS MINE! AND I THOUGHT I HAD KILLED YOU!


ZUKKA EXPLAINED HOW HE HAD SPENT THE LONG YEARS IN THE MORV JUNGLE WITH HIS ONLY FRIEND AND COMPANION - THE DREADED MORMONTH.
BUT THAT IS ALL FINISHED. NOW I SHALL REMAIN AND WORK WITH YOU, OLD FRIEND, AND PERFORM ALL THE MARVELS WE PLANNED WHEN WE WERE STUDENTS.
BUT- WHAT OF THE MORMONTH?
THE MORMONTH WILL RETURN TO THE JUNGLE. ZUKKA HAS ORDERED IT TO LIVE IN PEACE.

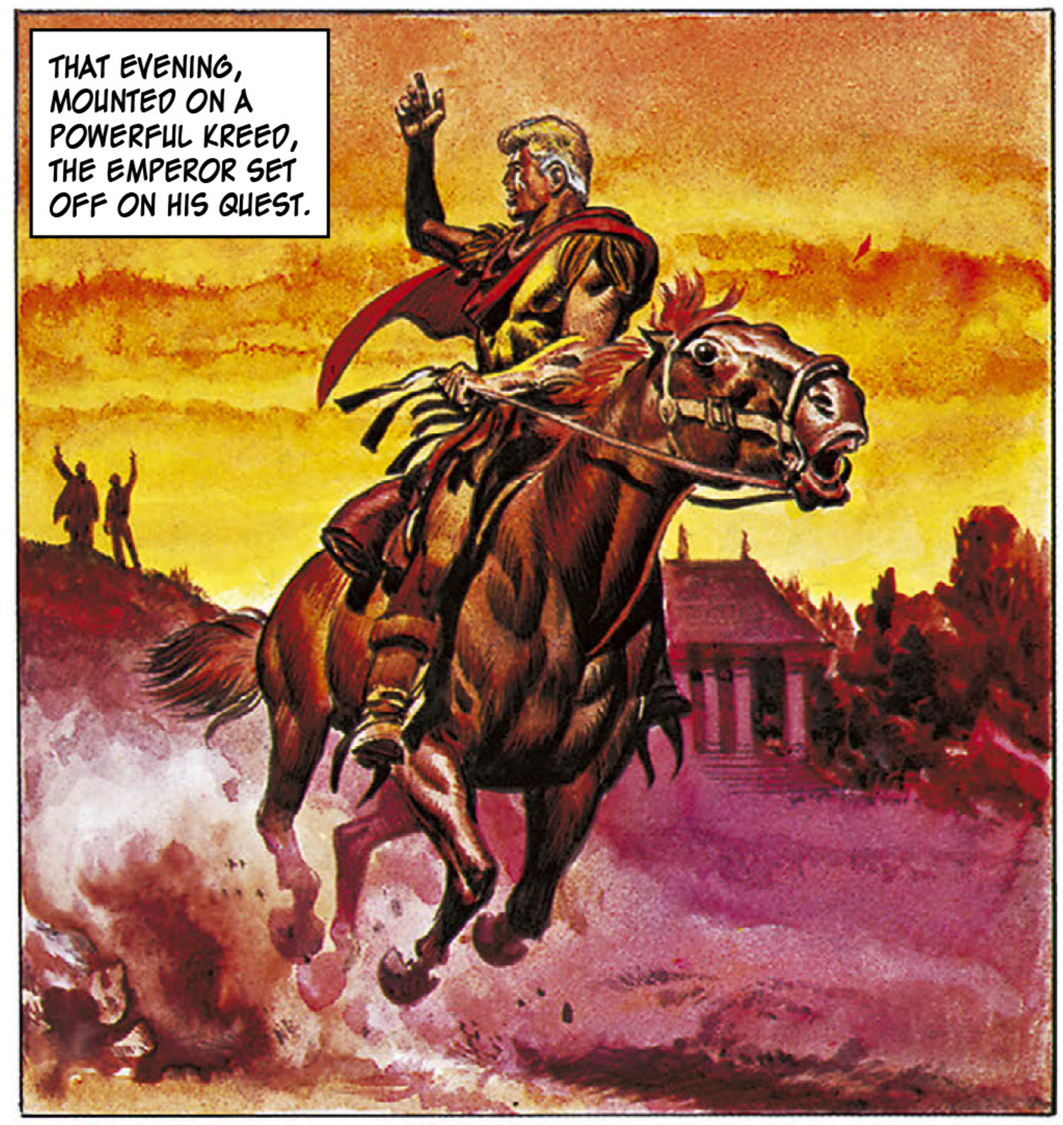

ONE LAST GLANCE AT THE MAN WHO HAD BEFRIENDED IT - AND THE FORMER TERROR OF MORV STEPPED ONTO THE RAFT.
FAREWELL!

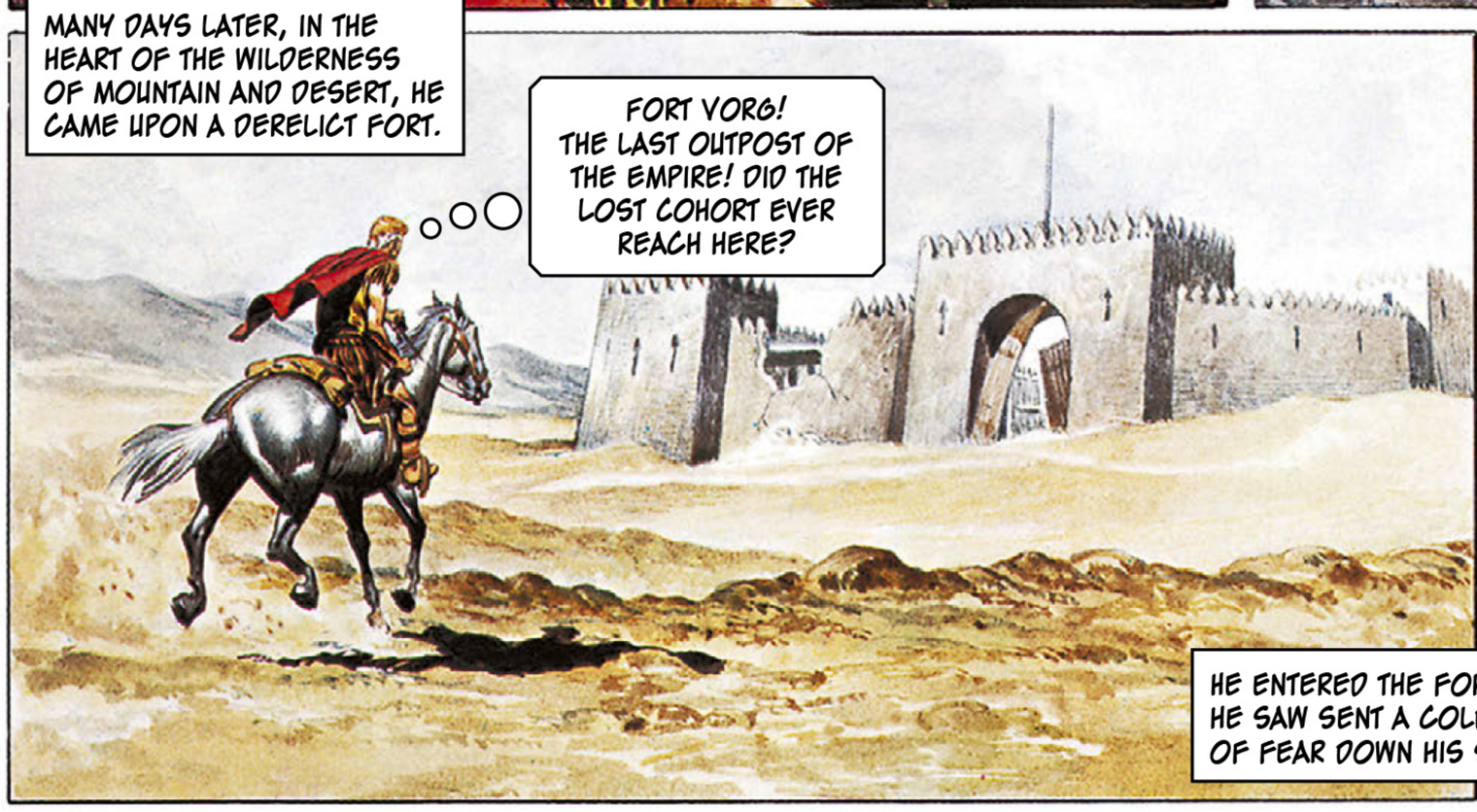
THEY WATCHED – UNTIL THE MASSIVE FIGURE WAS OUT OF SIGHT ROUND A BEND IN THE RIVER.

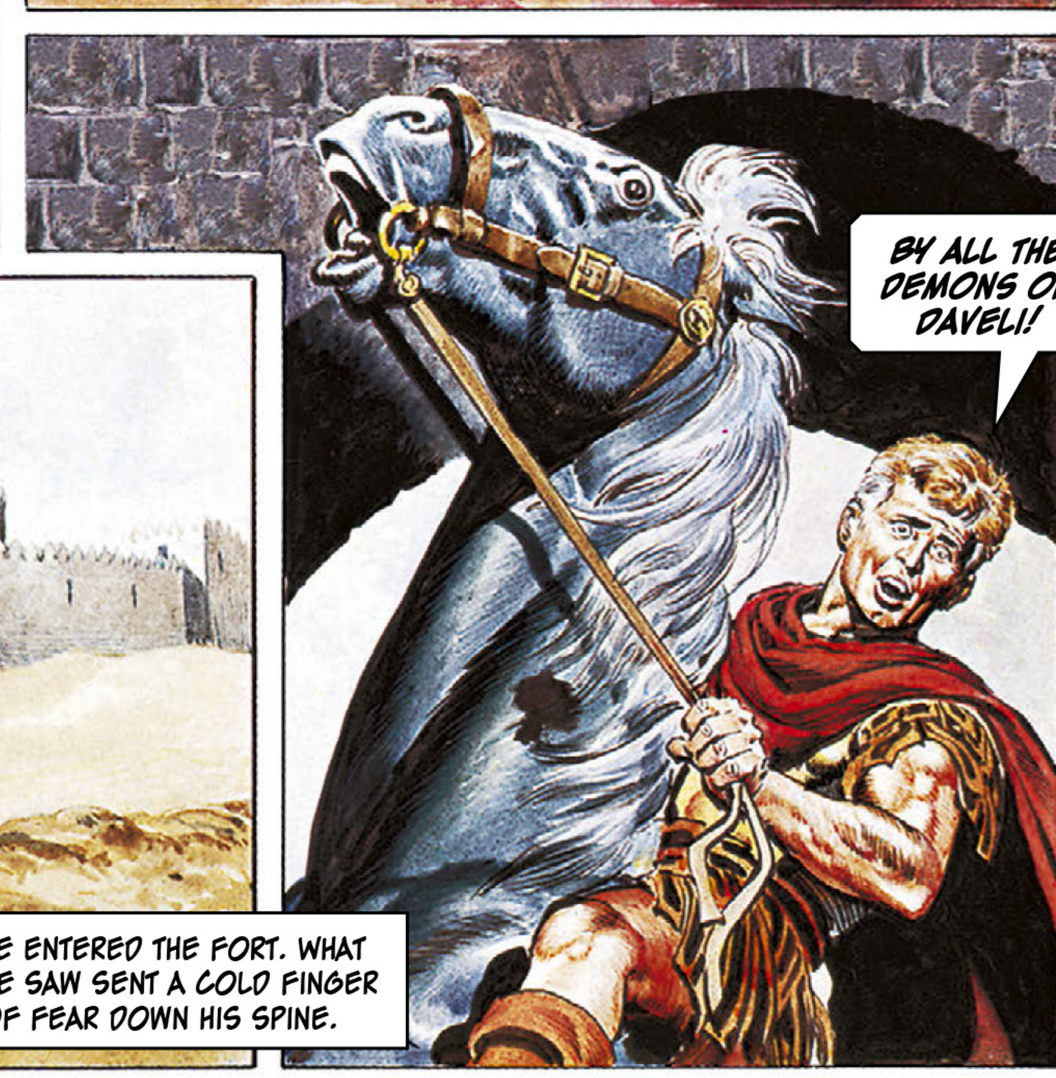
THAT SAME DAY, THE GRAND COUNCIL OF THE EMPIRE MET TO DELIVER TO TRIGO THE SECOND TASK. THERE WERE MANY WHO MUTTERED AMONG THEMSELVES.
I SAY HE PERFORMED THE FIRST TASK BY MEANS OF A TRICK!
TRUE! BUT HE WILL NOT BE SO LUCKY WITH THE SECOND!


THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL SPOKE – AND HIS VOICE SILENCED THE MUTTERING.
THE SECOND TASK IS THIS – YOU WILL JOURNEY TO THE DESERT OF ERRID AND FIND THE LOST COHORT THAT VANISHED THERE TEN LUNAR YEARS AGO!

HAVING RECEIVED HIS ORDERS, TRIGO CONFERRED WITH PERIC...
AS YOU ARE AWARE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THE FAMOUS LOST COHORT OF TRIGAN GUARDS MYSTERIOUSLY VANISHED FROM SIGHT WHILE PATROLLING THE DESERT. MASSIVE AIR RECONNAISSANCE FAILED TO REVEAL ANY TRACE OF THEM.
AN ARMY COULD HIDE IN THAT WILDERNESS AND NEVER BE SPOTTED FROM THE AIR. I SHALL TRAVEL BY KREED!


THAT EVENING, MOUNTED ON A POWERFUL KREED, THE EMPEROR SET OFF ON HIS QUEST.


MANY DAYS LATER, IN THE HEART OF THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNTAIN AND DESERT, HE CAME UPON A DERELICT FORT.
FORT VORG! THE LAST OUTPOST OF THE EMPIRE! DID THE LOST COHORT EVER REACH HERE?
HE ENTERED THE FORT. WHAT HE SAW SENT A COLD FINGER OF FEAR DOWN HIS SPINE.


BY ALL THE DEMONS OF DAVELI!

STANDING IN RIGID RANKS ON THE DUSTY PARADE GROUND WAS ***A PHANTOM COHORT!***

THE LEATHERWORK ROTTEN AND THE METAL RUSTY WITH AGE, THE ARMOUR OF TRIGAN GUARDSMEN HUNG ON SPEARS AND SWORDS.

THE ARMS AND ARMOUR OF THE LONG LOST COHORT!

TETHERING HIS MOUNT, TRIGO ENTERED THE BARRACK BUILDING.

IS ANYONE HERE...? HUH...?

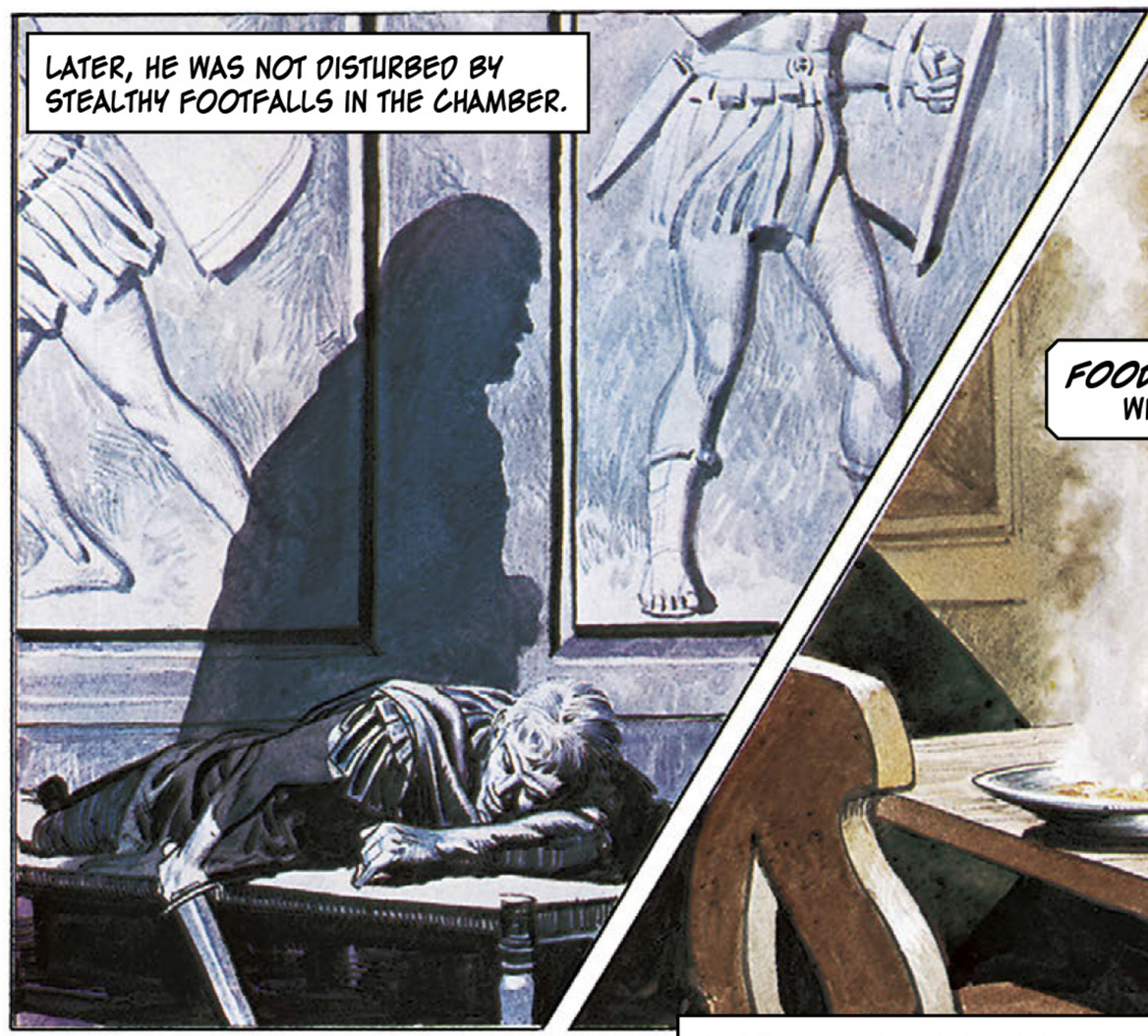
THE LONG TABLES WERE LAID FOR FORTY.

A PLACE FOR EVERY GUARDSMAN OF THE COHORT!

WHEN NIGHT FELL, TRIGO LAID HIMSELF DOWN TO SLEEP IN A SMALL CHAMBER OFF THE MAIN HALL. HE KEPT HIS DRAWN SWORD IN HIS HAND.

AT DAWN, I'LL SEARCH FOR THE MEANING BEHIND THIS DEVILRY!

AS HE FELL ASLEEP, HE WAS WATCHED BY A LIVING EYE!

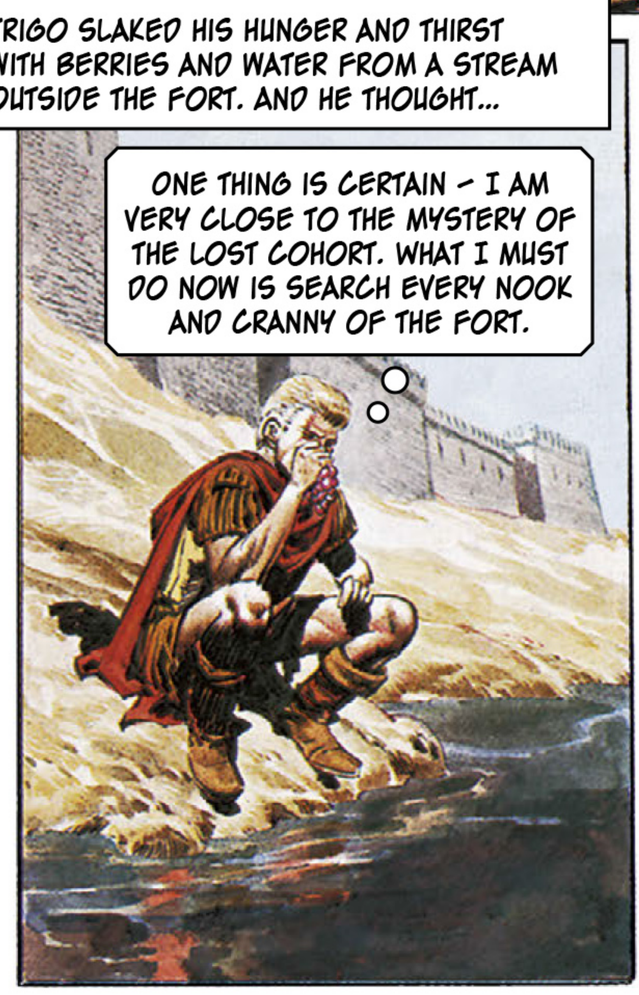

LATER, HE WAS NOT DISTURBED BY STEALTHY FOOTFALLS IN THE CHAMBER.

TRIGO AWOKE AT DAWN, AS WAS HIS CUSTOM, AND SAW–
FOOD! BUT... WHO?

THE FOOD SMELT APPETISING BUT TRIGO'S NATIVE CAUTION MADE HIM RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO DEVOUR IT.
POISONED...? PERHAPS!

TURNING TO LEAVE THE CHAMBER, HE REACHED FOR HIS SWORD... IT HAD GONE!
BUT... I LEFT IT LYING HERE A FEW MOMENTS AGO!

SHOCK FOLLOWED SHOCK. HE WENT OUT TO THE PARADE GROUND – AND SAW THE BROKEN TETHER OF HIS KREED!
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS ACCURSED PLACE?


TRIGO SLAKED HIS HUNGER AND THIRST WITH BERRIES AND WATER FROM A STREAM OUTSIDE THE FORT. AND HE THOUGHT...
ONE THING IS CERTAIN – I AM VERY CLOSE TO THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST COHORT. WHAT I MUST DO NOW IS SEARCH EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY OF THE FORT.

SO HE BEGAN A SLOW AND METHODICAL SEARCH OF THE SILENT STRONGHOLD. THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE HIGH IN THE SKY WHEN HE LIFTED A RUG IN THE MAIN HALL AND FOUND...
A TRAPDOOR!

TRIGO RAISED THE TRAPDOOR – AND BEGAN, WITHOUT HESITATION, TO DESCEND THE STAIRS THAT LAY BELOW!
GIVE ME COURAGE! I MAY NEED IT!

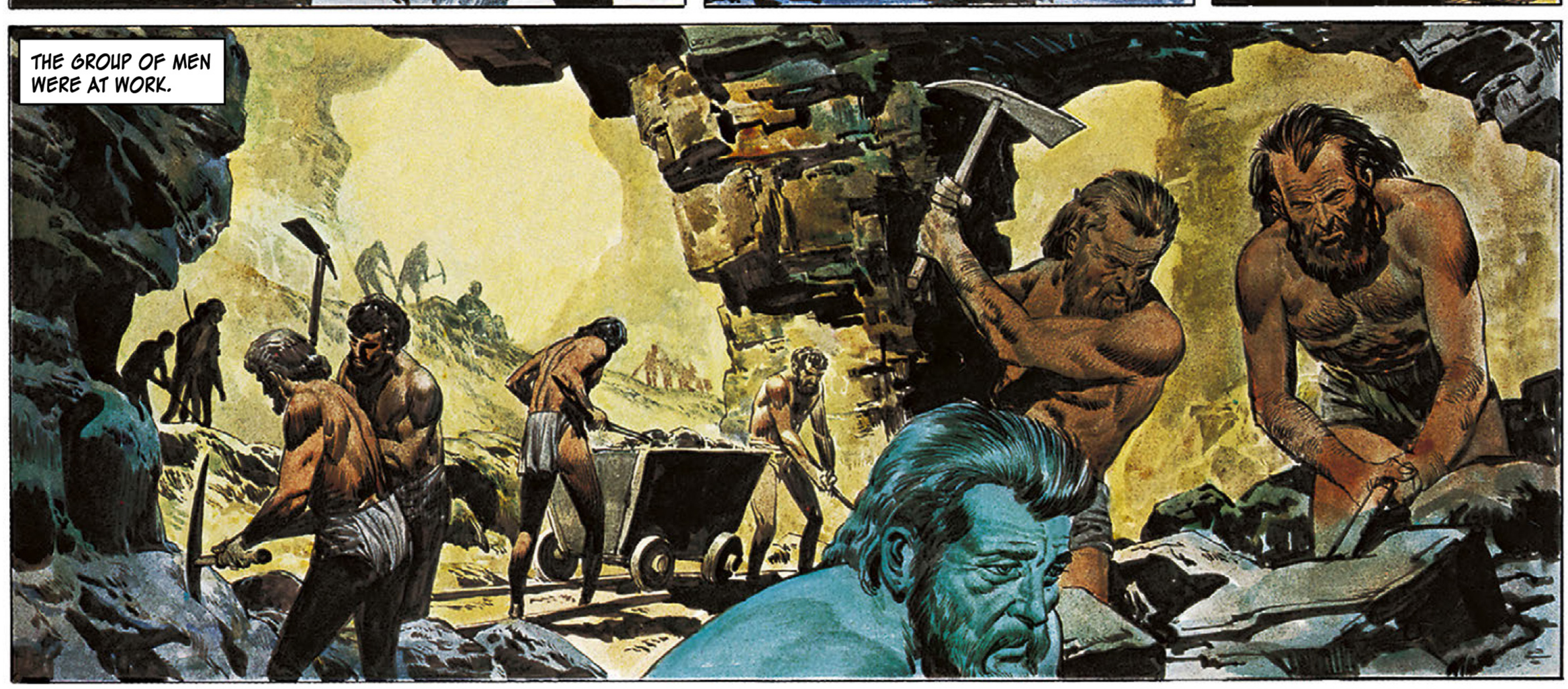
TRIGO REACHED THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS, UNAWARE THAT SHADOWY FIGURES WERE CLOSING IN ON HIM!

AND THEN – IT HAPPENED!
AAAAH!

TRIGO DUCKED A SAVAGE BLOW AND SWUNG BOTH HIS BUNCHED FISTS!
AAAAAGH!
UUUUUGH!

THE FIGHT WAS BRIEF BUT FURIOUS. THE END CAME WHEN TRIGO'S WORLD DISSOLVED IN A SEA OF PAIN...
NNNNNGG...

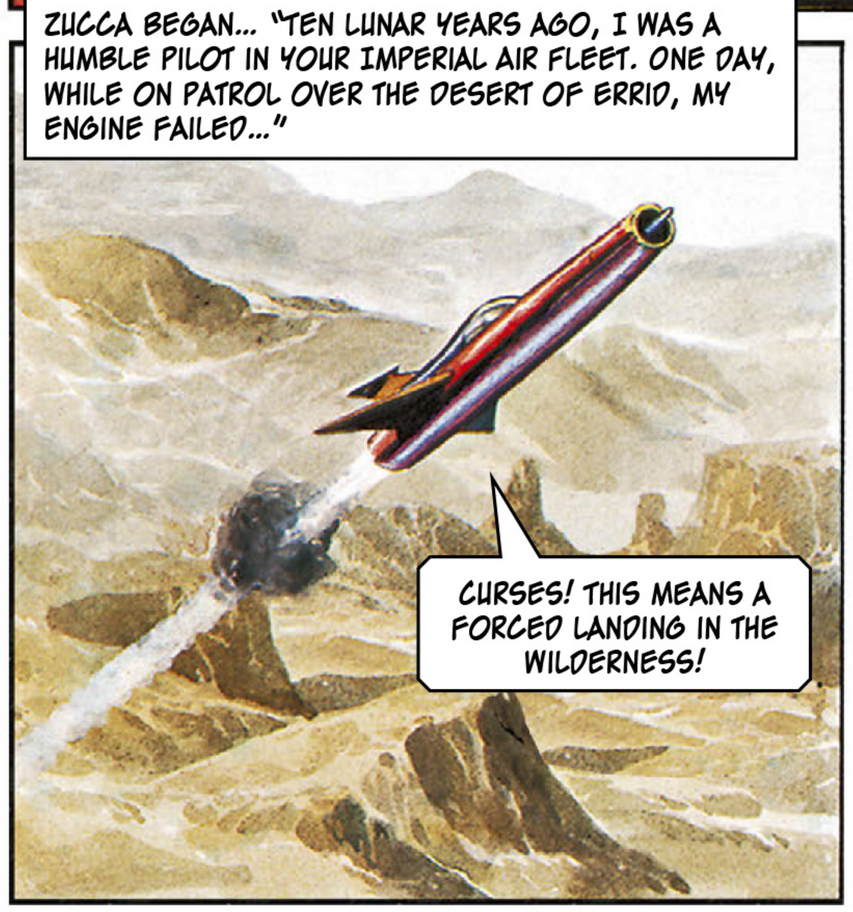
HE AWOKE TO FIND HIMSELF IN A WELL-LIT CAVERN. THE THUD OF METAL STRIKING ROCK SOUNDED IN HIS EARS.
FORTY OF THEM...! THE FORTY MEN OF THE LOST COHORT!

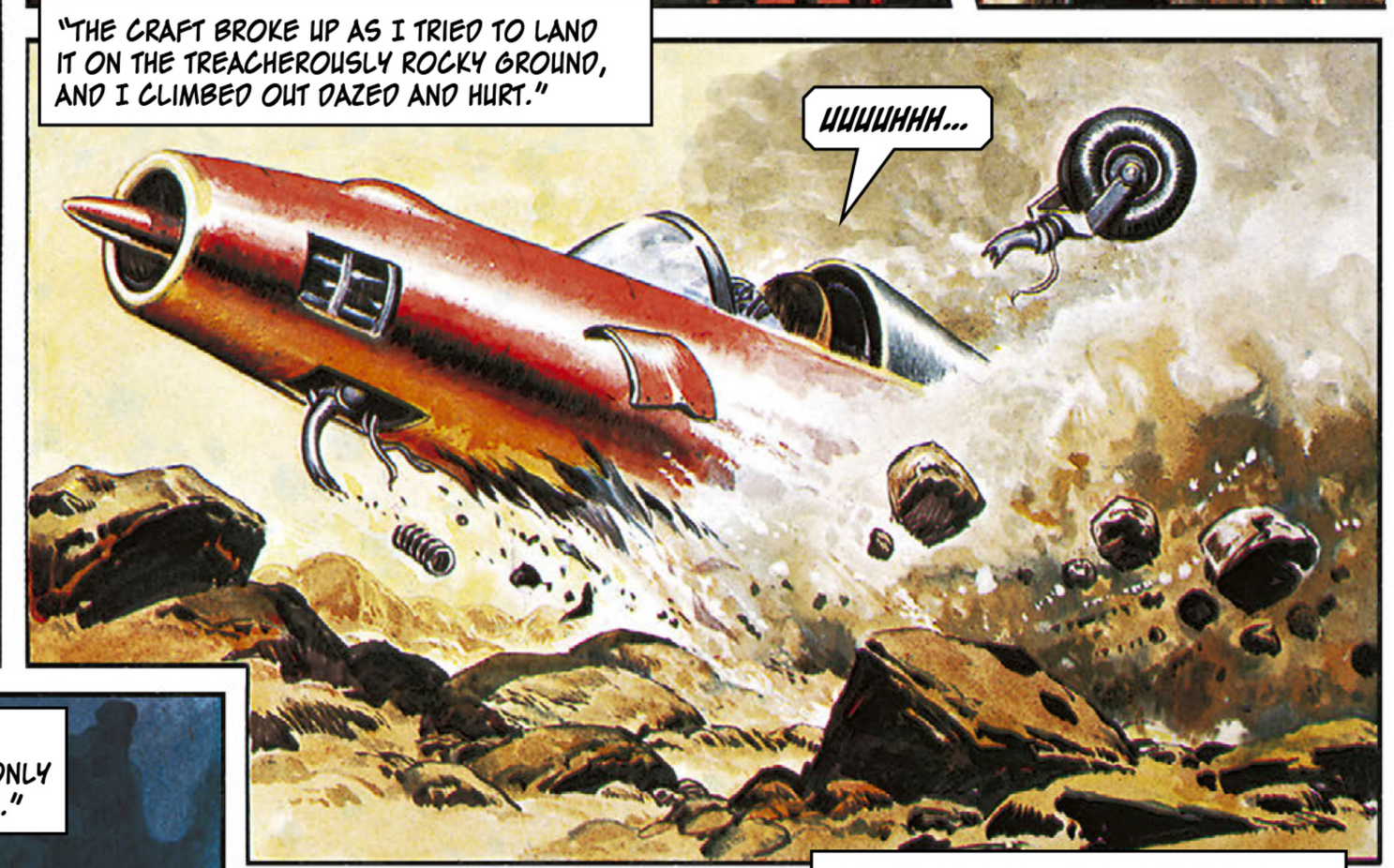

THE GROUP OF MEN WERE AT WORK.

THEIR EYES ARE EXPRESSIONLESS, LIKE THE EYES OF SLEEPWALKERS!

AND THEN... A MOCKING VOICE!
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! I BELIEVE I HAVE THE HONOUR OF ADDRESSING THE EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS, HAVE I NOT?
WHO ARE YOU?

THE STRANGER REPLIED.
MY NAME IS ZUCCA AND, SINCE IT IS OF INTEREST, I WILL TELL YOU MY STORY. UNFORTUNATELY, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, YOU WILL NEVER LIVE TO REPEAT IT...

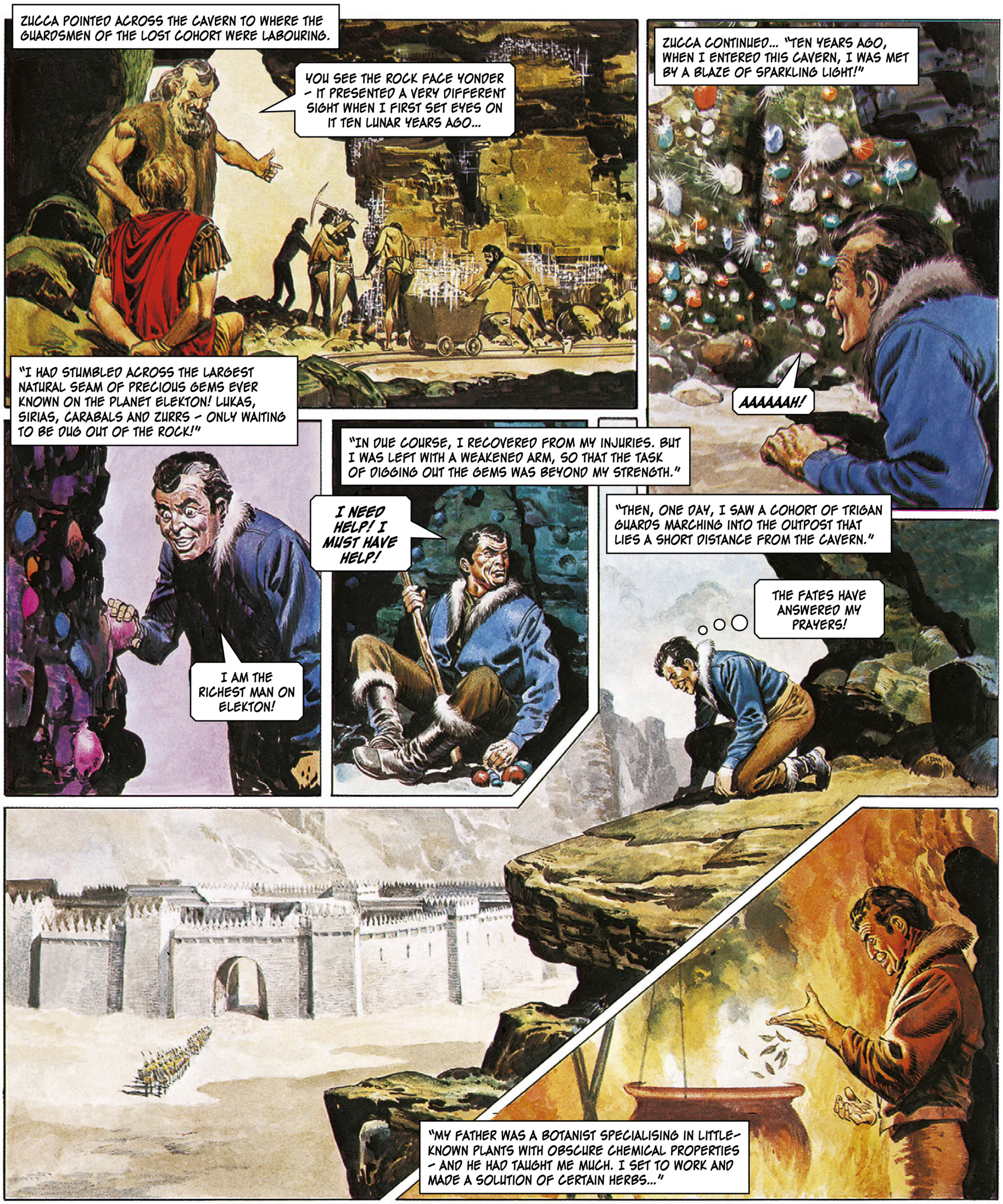

ZUCCA BEGAN... "TEN LUNAR YEARS AGO, I WAS A HUMBLE PILOT IN YOUR IMPERIAL AIR FLEET. ONE DAY, WHILE ON PATROL OVER THE DESERT OF ERRID, MY ENGINE FAILED..."
CURSES! THIS MEANS A FORCED LANDING IN THE WILDERNESS!


"THE CRAFT BROKE UP AS I TRIED TO LAND IT ON THE TREACHEROUSLY ROCKY GROUND, AND I CLIMBED OUT DAZED AND HURT."
UUUUHHH...

"THAT NIGHT, WHILE LYING IN AGONY NEAR THE AIRCRAFT WRECKAGE, I WAS ATTACKED BY PROWLING ZARGOTS AND ONLY ESCAPED BY CRAWLING INTO A CLEFT IN THE MOUNTAINSIDE."
AAAAAH... AAAAAH!

"THERE WAS NO RETREAT. I CRAWLED ON AND ON..."
I CAN'T GO BACK... THE BRUTES WILL BE WAITING FOR ME!

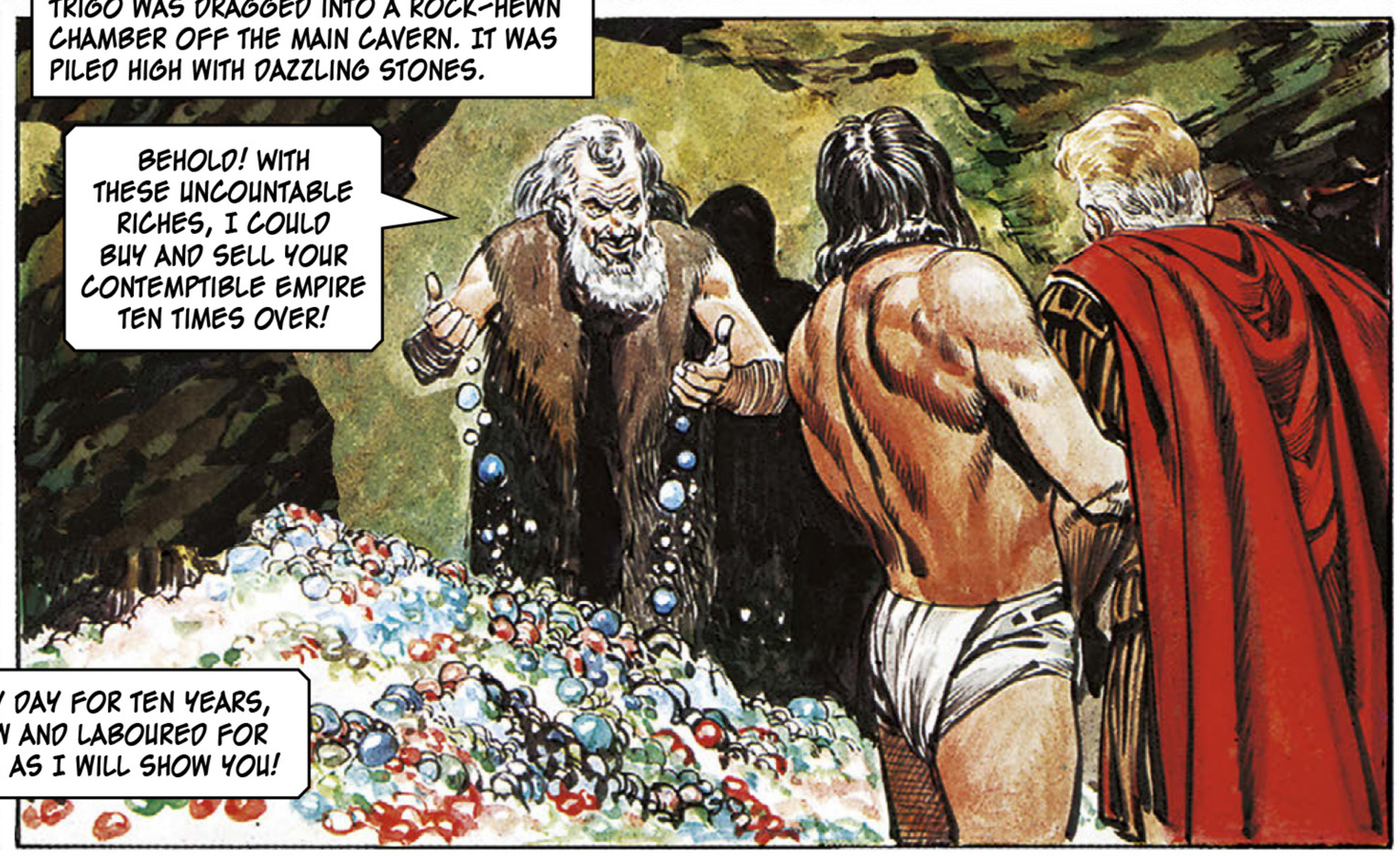
"I FAINTED MANY TIMES FROM PAIN. AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY, I EMERGED INTO THIS CAVERN – AND WHAT I SAW BROUGHT A CRY OF ASTONISHMENT TO MY LIPS!"
AAAAAH! IT CAN'T BE TRUE... IT CAN'T!


ZUCCA POINTED ACROSS THE CAVERN TO WHERE THE GUARDSMEN OF THE LOST COHORT WERE LABOURING.
YOU SEE THE ROCK FACE YONDER – IT PRESENTED A VERY DIFFERENT SIGHT WHEN I FIRST SET EYES ON IT TEN LUNAR YEARS AGO...
"I HAD STUMBLED ACROSS THE LARGEST NATURAL SEAM OF PRECIOUS GEMS EVER KNOWN ON THE PLANET ELEKTON! LUKAS, SIRIAS, CARABALS AND ZURRS – ONLY WAITING TO BE DUG OUT OF THE ROCK!"
I AM THE RICHEST MAN ON ELEKTON!
"IN DUE COURSE, I RECOVERED FROM MY INJURIES. BUT I WAS LEFT WITH A WEAKENED ARM, SO THAT THE TASK OF DIGGING OUT THE GEMS WAS BEYOND MY STRENGTH."
I NEED HELP! I MUST HAVE HELP!
ZUCCA CONTINUED... "TEN YEARS AGO, WHEN I ENTERED THIS CAVERN, I WAS MET BY A BLAZE OF SPARKLING LIGHT!"
AAAAAAH!
"THEN, ONE DAY, I SAW A COHORT OF TRIGAN GUARDS MARCHING INTO THE OUTPOST THAT LIES A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE CAVERN."
THE FATES HAVE ANSWERED MY PRAYERS!
"MY FATHER WAS A BOTANIST SPECIALISING IN LITTLE-KNOWN PLANTS WITH OBSCURE CHEMICAL PROPERTIES – AND HE HAD TAUGHT ME MUCH. I SET TO WORK AND MADE A SOLUTION OF CERTAIN HERBS..."

"UNDER COVER OF NIGHT, I CLIMBED INTO THE FORT AND INTRODUCED THE SOLUTION INTO THE COHORT'S DRINKING WATER!"
BY MIDDAY TOMORROW, THE MEN OF THE COHORT WILL BE MY MINDLESS SLAVES!

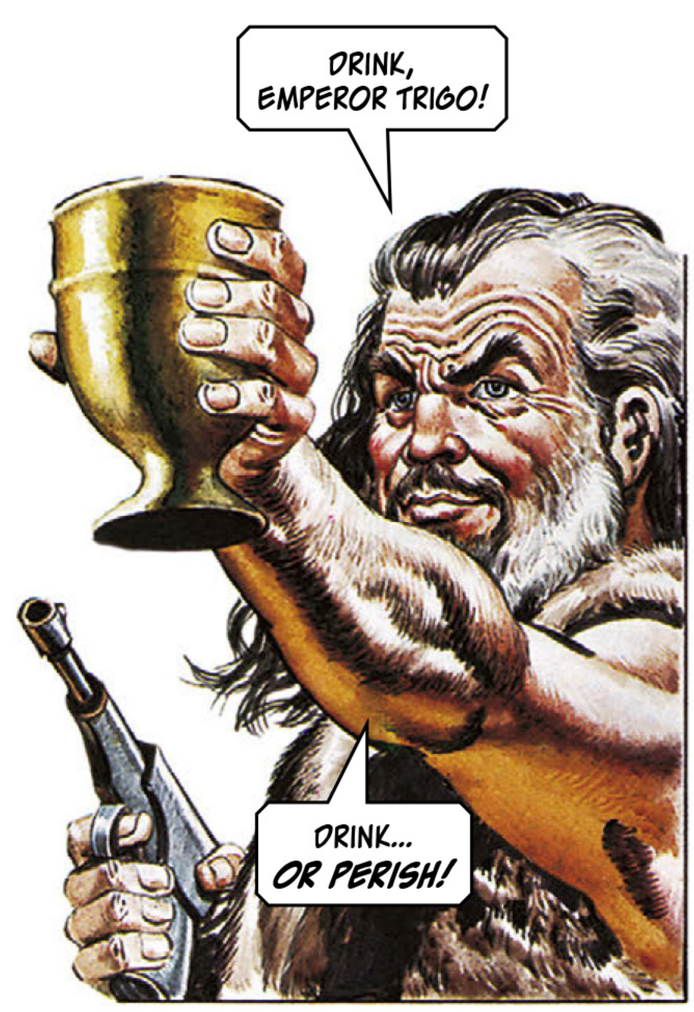
"AND SO IT WAS – NEXT DAY I WAS ABLE TO ENTER THE FORT AND GIVE ORDERS TO THE MEN OF THE COHORT. THEIR BRAINS NUMBED BY THE EFFECT OF MY BREW, THEY COULD ONLY OBEY."
LISTEN! HERE IS WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO DO...

ZUCCA CONCLUDED HIS STRANGE TALE...
THAT WAS TEN YEARS AGO... EVERY DAY FOR TEN YEARS, THE COHORT HAVE DRUNK MY BREW AND LABOURED FOR ME. THE TASK IS NEARLY FINISHED, AS I WILL SHOW YOU!


TRIGO WAS DRAGGED INTO A ROCK-HEWN CHAMBER OFF THE MAIN CAVERN. IT WAS PILED HIGH WITH DAZZLING STONES.
BEHOLD! WITH THESE UNCOUNTABLE RICHES, I COULD BUY AND SELL YOUR CONTEMPTIBLE EMPIRE TEN TIMES OVER!

THEY RETURNED TO THE CAVERN – WHERE A LARGE VAT WAS BEING TRUNDLED IN.
THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE DAILY DRINK!

ZUCCA GLANCED AT TRIGO WITH MALICE IN HIS EYES.
I HAVE WATCHED YOUR PROGRESS SINCE THE MOMENT YOU ENTERED THE FORT AND I RECOGNISED YOU AT ONCE. THERE IS NOT MUCH WORK LEFT TO BE DONE BUT I HAVE AN AMUSING FANCY TO HAVE AN EMPEROR SLAVING FOR ME...


DRINK, EMPEROR TRIGO!
DRINK... OR PERISH!

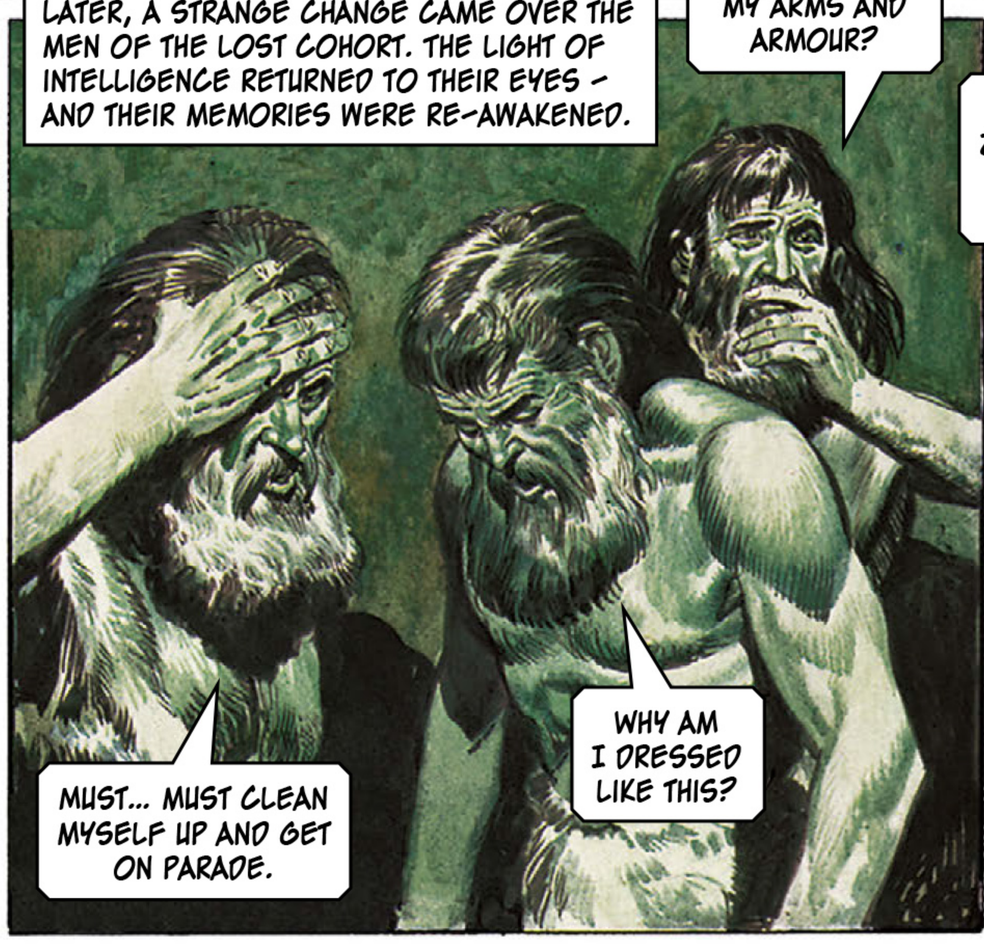
AS ZUCCA WAS ABOUT TO MAKE TRIGO DRINK, THE EMPEROR ACTED! TWISTING HIS BODY, HE FREED HIMSELF FROM THE GRIP OF THE MEN HOLDING HIM AND LASHED OUT WITH BOTH BUNCHED FISTS!
UUUUUGH!
EEEEEGH!

ZUCCA'S PISTOL STABBED FLAME BUT ITS OWNER WAS SENSELESS ON HIS FEET AT THE SAME INSTANT!

THE REMAINDER OF THE ENSLAVED COHORT MOVED FORWARD TO DEAL WITH THEIR MASTER'S ASSAILANT BUT THEY WERE BROUGHT UP SHORT BY A SHOUTED COMMAND FROM TRIGO...
GUARDSMEN... HALT! STAND TO ATTENTION!

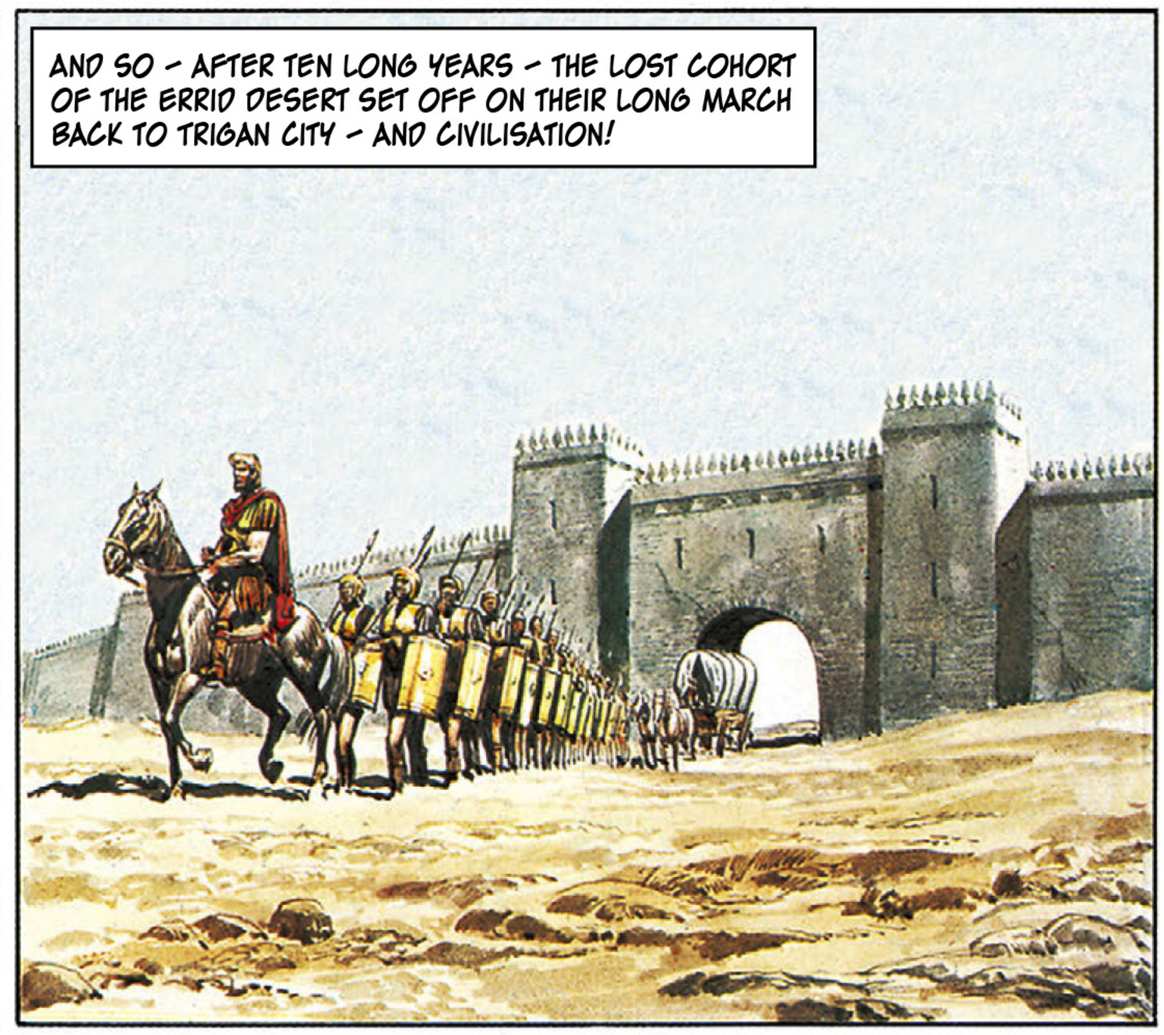
SOME LONG-FORGOTTEN CHORD OF MEMORY STIRRED IN THEIR DRUGGED MINDS - AND THEY OBEYED THE ORDER.
YOU HEARD THE COMMAND OF YOUR EMPEROR! STAND WHERE YOU ARE!

TRIGO BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF.
THANK THE STARS! NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WAIT AND LET SOME TIME GO PAST!

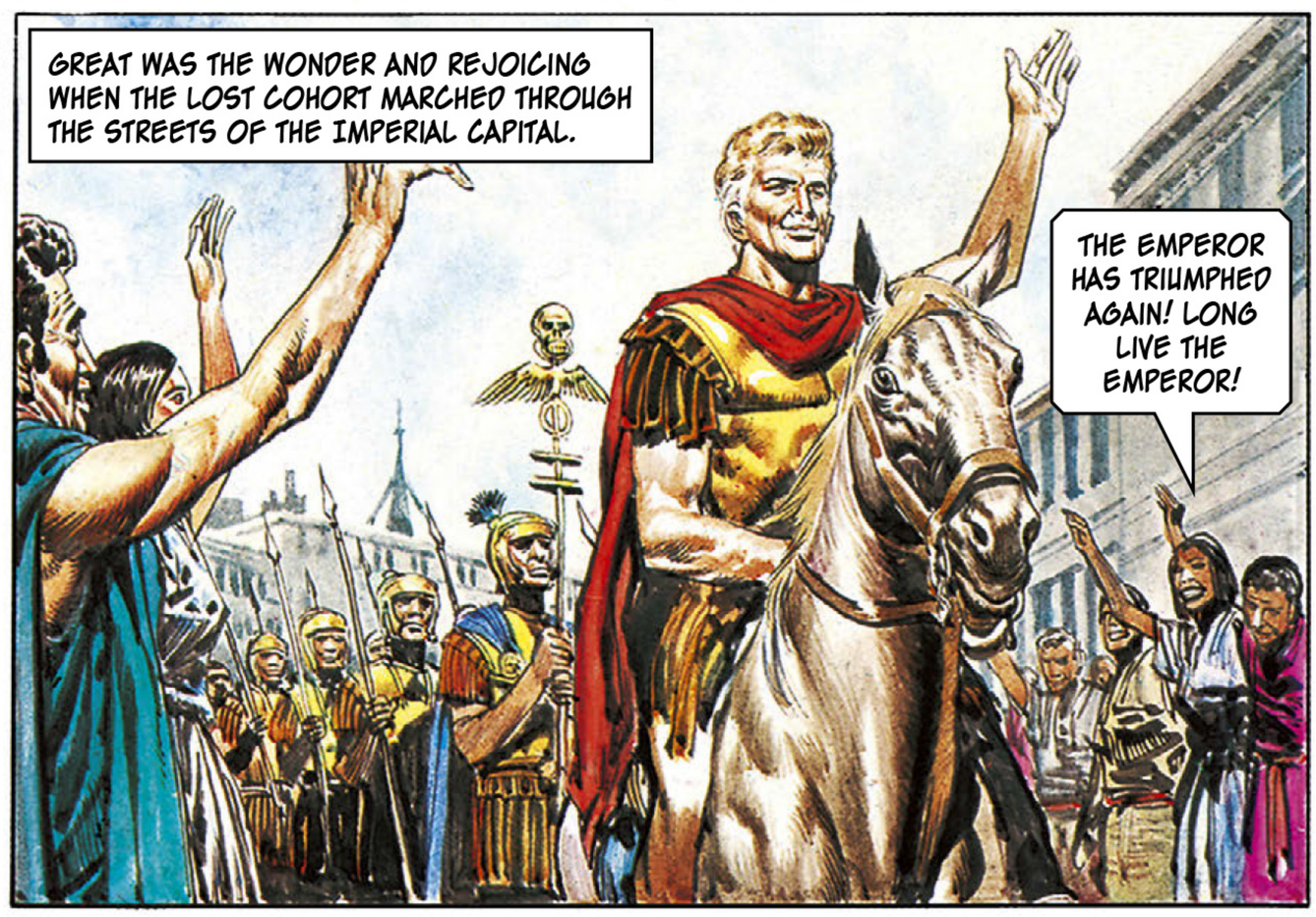

LATER, A STRANGE CHANGE CAME OVER THE MEN OF THE LOST COHORT. THE LIGHT OF INTELLIGENCE RETURNED TO THEIR EYES - AND THEIR MEMORIES WERE RE-AWAKENED.
WHERE ARE MY ARMS AND ARMOUR?
MUST... MUST CLEAN MYSELF UP AND GET ON PARADE.
WHY AM I DRESSED LIKE THIS?

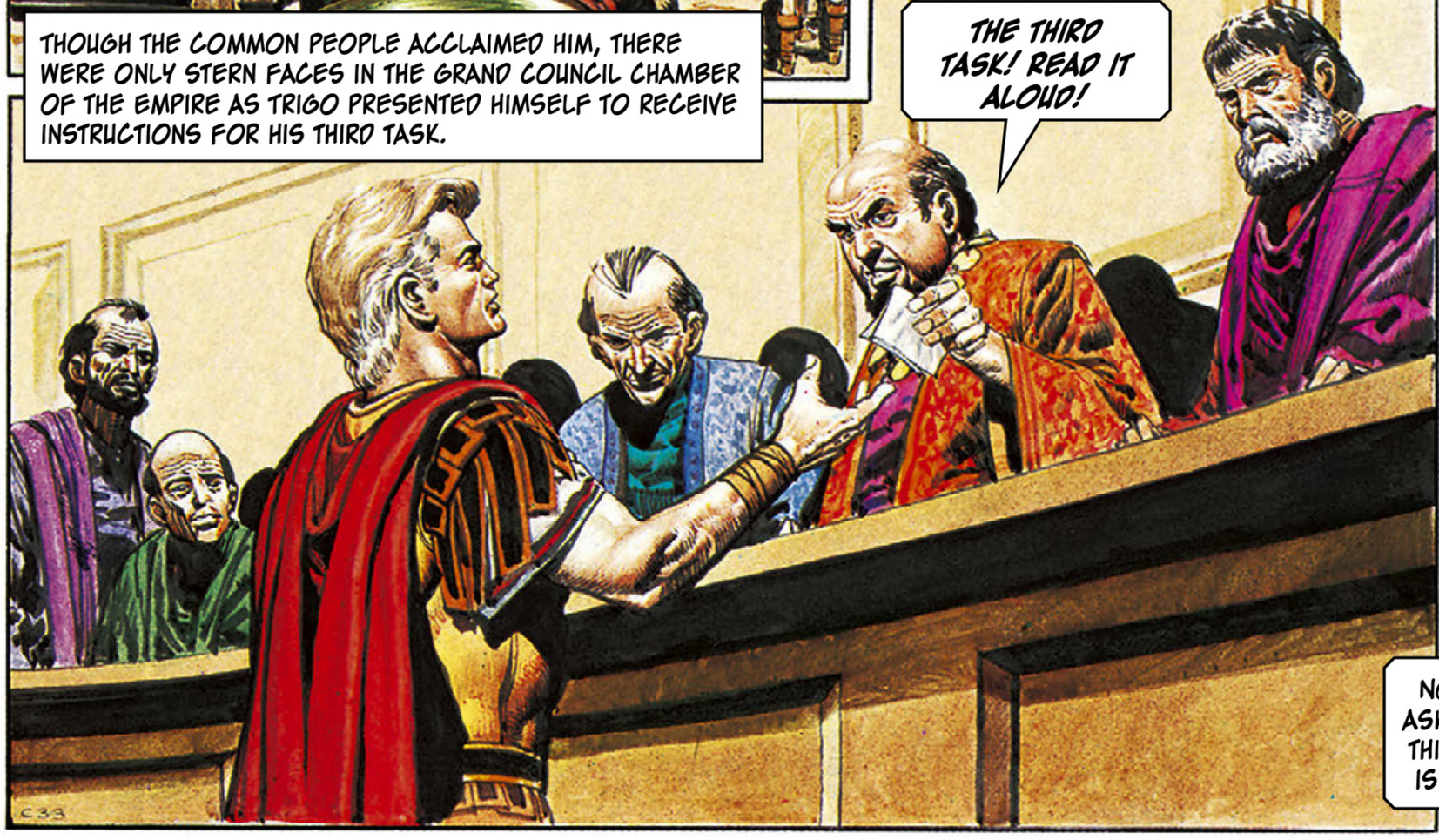
THE EFFECT OF ZUCCA'S FIENDISH DAILY BREW IS WEARING OFF!

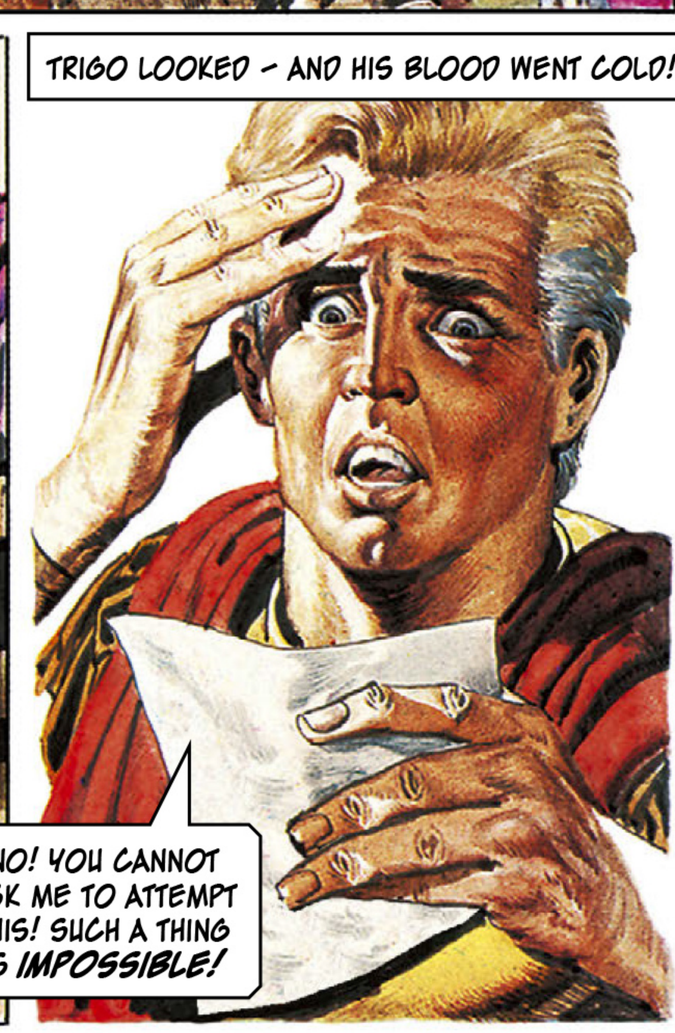
THE FOLLOWING MORNING, AT DAWN, THE SHRILL NOTES OF THE COHORT'S TRUMPET CALLED THE GUARDSMEN ON PARADE IN THE FORT.
COHORT READY TO MARCH, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
CARRY ON!


AND SO – AFTER TEN LONG YEARS – THE LOST COHORT OF THE ERRID DESERT SET OFF ON THEIR LONG MARCH BACK TO TRIGAN CITY – AND CIVILISATION!

WITH THEM THEY TOOK THE VAST TREASURE OF THE SUBTERRANEAN CAVERN – AND ONE SCOWLING PRISONER!
THE GEMS WILL SERVE TO BETTER THE LOT OF MILLIONS OF THE EMPIRE'S POOREST SUBJECTS! THE LAST TEN YEARS' EFFORTS HAVE NOT BEEN WASTED AFTER ALL, ZUCCA!


GREAT WAS THE WONDER AND REJOICING WHEN THE LOST COHORT MARCHED THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL.
THE EMPEROR HAS TRIUMPHED AGAIN! LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!


THOUGH THE COMMON PEOPLE ACCLAIMED HIM, THERE WERE ONLY STERN FACES IN THE GRAND COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE EMPIRE AS TRIGO PRESENTED HIMSELF TO RECEIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR HIS THIRD TASK.
THE THIRD TASK! READ IT ALOUD!


TRIGO LOOKED – AND HIS BLOOD WENT COLD!
NO! YOU CANNOT ASK ME TO ATTEMPT THIS! SUCH A THING IS IMPOSSIBLE!

THE PLANET OF ELEKTON, WHICH LIES IN THE GALAXY OF YARNA, IS NEARLY TWICE THE SIZE OF EARTH AND ONE THIRD OF ITS SURFACE IS COVERED WITH WATER.

IN SHOCKED TONES, TRIGO READ ALOUD TO THE ASSEMBLED GRAND COUNCIL OF THE EMPIRE THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR HIS THIRD TASK...

"YOU WILL ENCIRCLE ELEKTON IN THIRTY DAYS, WITHOUT THE AID OF MECHANICAL PROPULSION. NEITHER WILL YOU ACCEPT ANY HELP FROM ANY SUBJECT OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!"

IMMEDIATELY, TRIGO, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS BROTHER AND NEPHEW, CONSULTED WISE OLD PERIC.

THE TASK IS THEORETICALLY ALMOST POSSIBLE – GIVEN A FAST KREED TO RIDE, WITHOUT PAUSE, DAY AND NIGHT. BUT NO KREED YET BORN COULD GALLOP FOR THIRTY DAYS AND NIGHTS WITHOUT REST!

JANNO CAME UP WITH A WILD SUGGESTION...

IT CAN BE DONE! WE WILL ARRANGE FOR A RELAY OF FRESH KREEDS TO BE READY FOR UNCLE AT VARIOUS STAGES OF HIS JOURNEY!

IN YOUR YOUTHFUL ENTHUSIASM, MY FRIEND, YOU ARE FORGETTING HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS NOT ALLOWED TO ACCEPT ANY HELP FROM SUBJECTS OF THE EMPIRE!

FURTHERMORE, I SAID THAT THE TASK IS ***ALMOST*** POSSIBLE. I DID NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT ONE-THIRD OF THE JOURNEY WILL BE ACROSS WATER, WHERE A KREED WOULD BE USELESS!

ENOUGH OF THIS GLOOMY TALK! I WILL COMMENCE THE JOURNEY BY KREED AND SEE HOW MY LUCK TURNS OUT!

PERIC SAW THE DETERMINATION IN THE EYES OF HIS OLD FRIEND AND RULER AND, WITHOUT MORE ADO, HE PRODUCED A MAP.

THE FIRST PART OF YOUR JOURNEY WILL BE THE MOST DIFFICULT. LEAVING TRIGAN CITY, YOU WILL SKIRT THE GULF OF VORG, THEN FACE THE ALMOST IMPASSABLE DESERT OF DOOM...

NEXT MORNING, AT DAWN, TRIGO SET OFF ON HIS ROUND-THE-PLANET JOURNEY, MOUNTED ON THE FINEST KREED IN THE IMPERIAL STABLES.

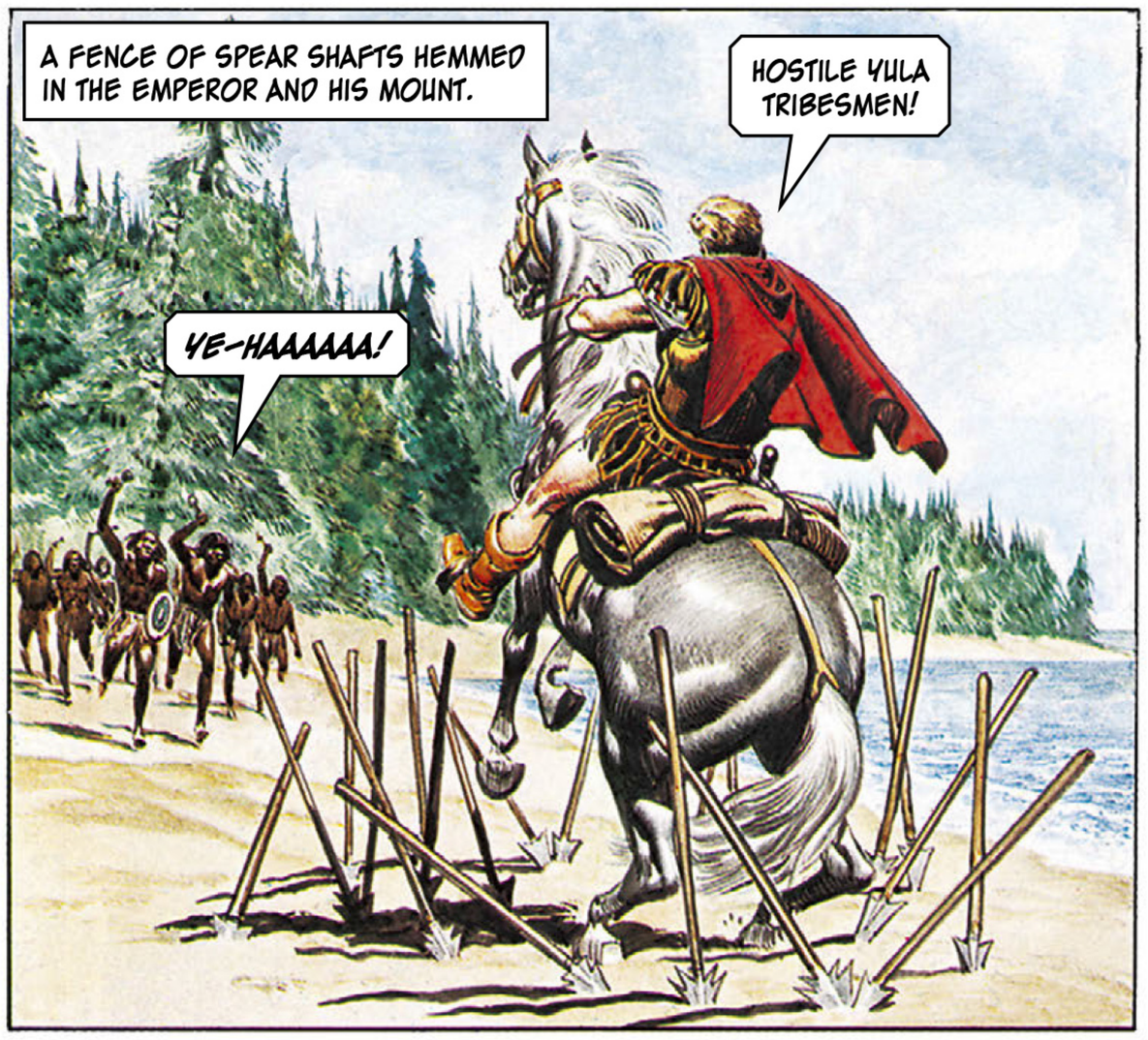
FASTER, ICAR! FASTER! WE HAVE FAR TO GO!

EXACTLY A DAY LATER – WITHOUT REST – THE GALLANT BUT WEARY KREED WAS CARRYING HIM ALONG BESIDE THICK JUNGLE, WHEN...

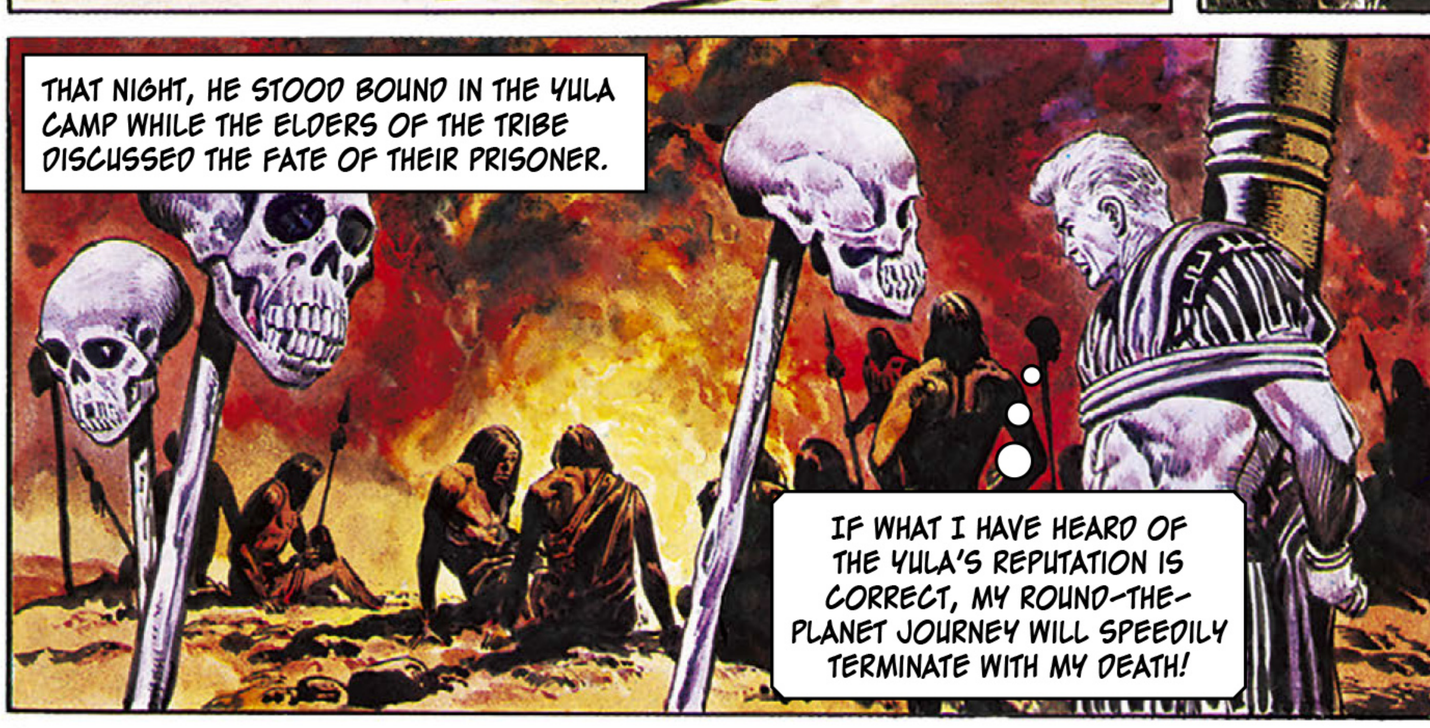
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, MY ICAR! TWENTY-NINE MORE DAYS LIKE THE LAST AND I COULD RETAIN MY EMPIRE – BUT I CANNOT ASK MUCH MORE OF YOU...

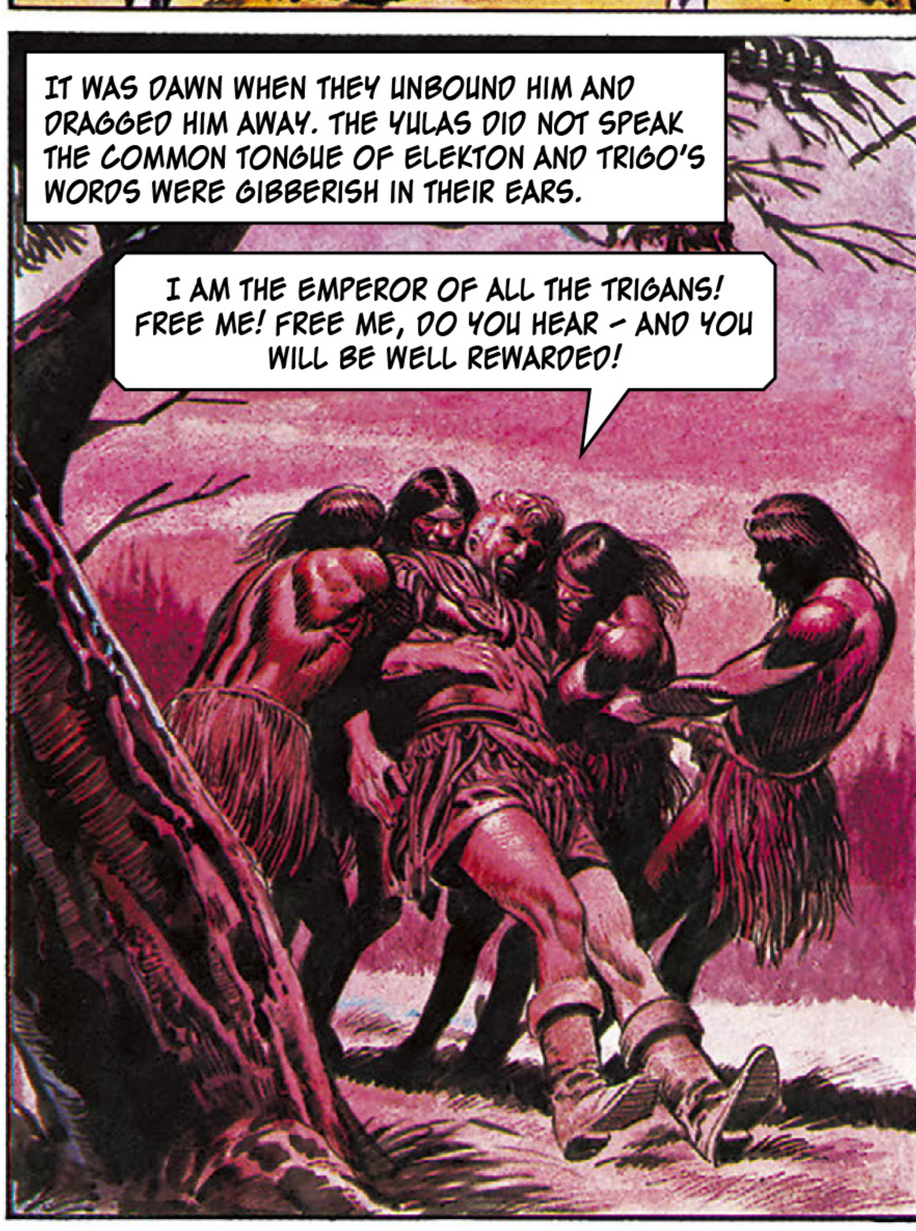
FROM THE DENSE UNDERGROWTH – A SHOWER OF SPEARS!

YA-HEEEEEEE!

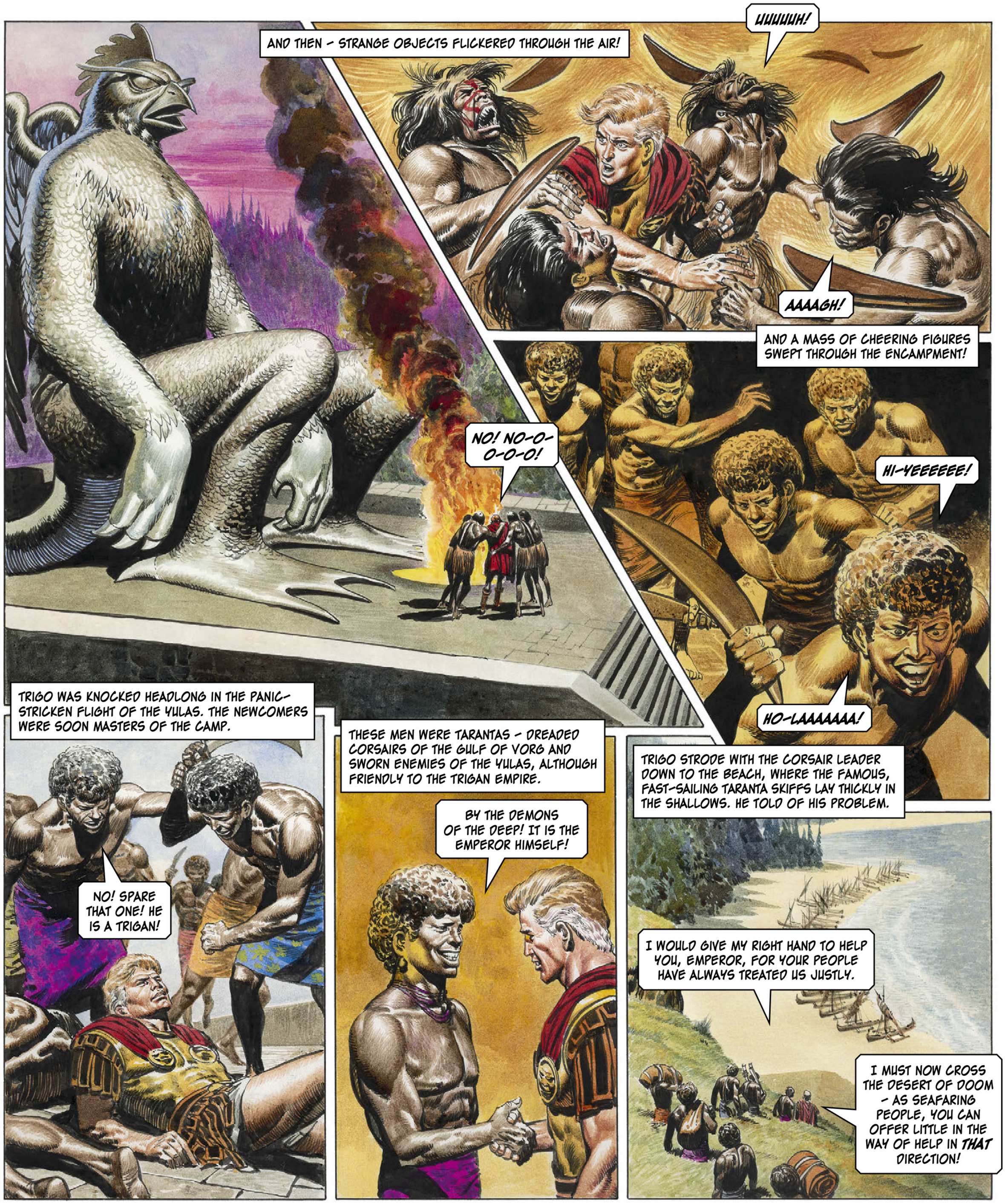

A FENCE OF SPEAR SHAFTS HEMMED IN THE EMPEROR AND HIS MOUNT.
HOSTILE YULA TRIBESMEN!
YE-HAAAAAA!

TRIGO SWUNG WITH HIS SWORD BUT A YULA WAR-CLUB PITCHED HIM HEADLONG FROM THE SADDLE!
HAH!
UUUUUUUUH!

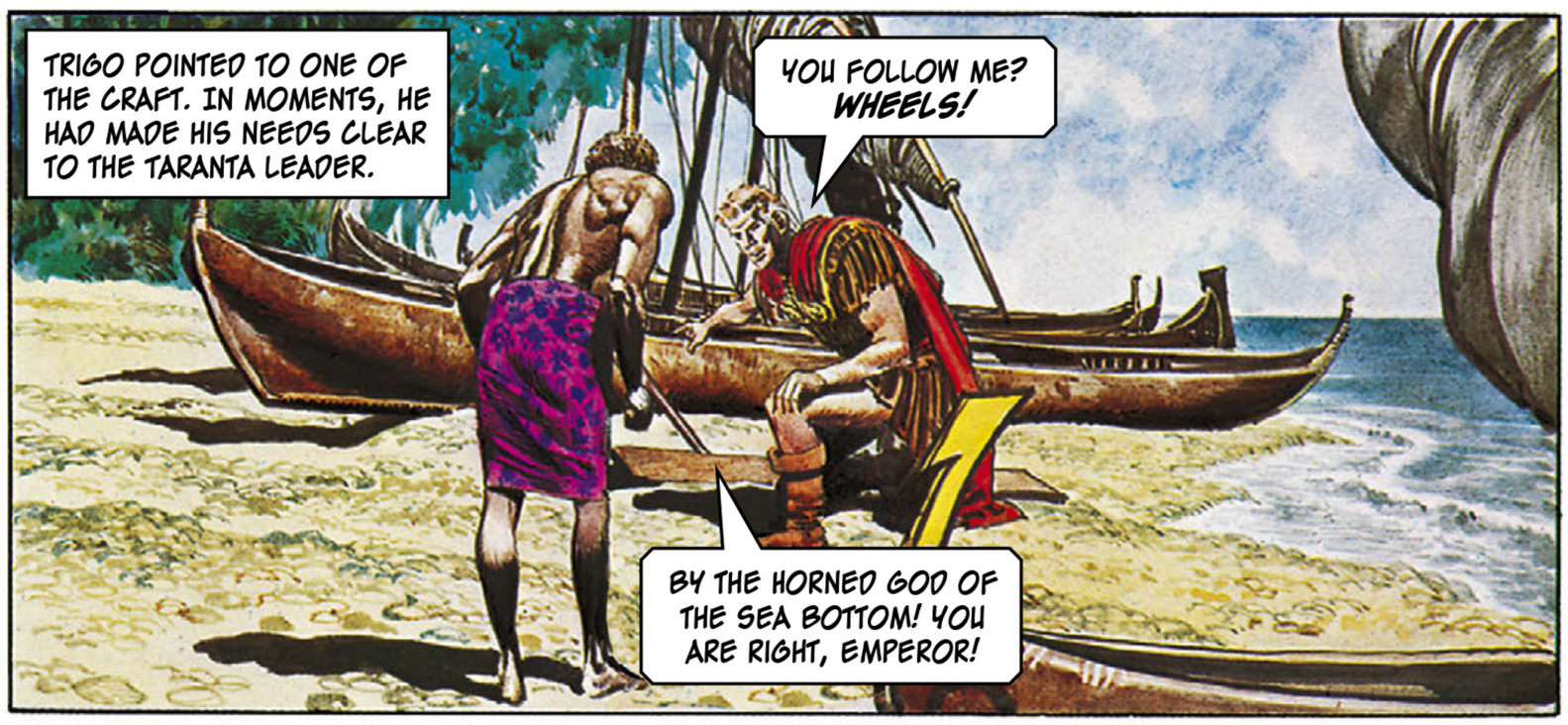

THAT NIGHT, HE STOOD BOUND IN THE YULA CAMP WHILE THE ELDERS OF THE TRIBE DISCUSSED THE FATE OF THEIR PRISONER.
IF WHAT I HAVE HEARD OF THE YULA'S REPUTATION IS CORRECT, MY ROUND-THE-PLANET JOURNEY WILL SPEEDILY TERMINATE WITH MY DEATH!

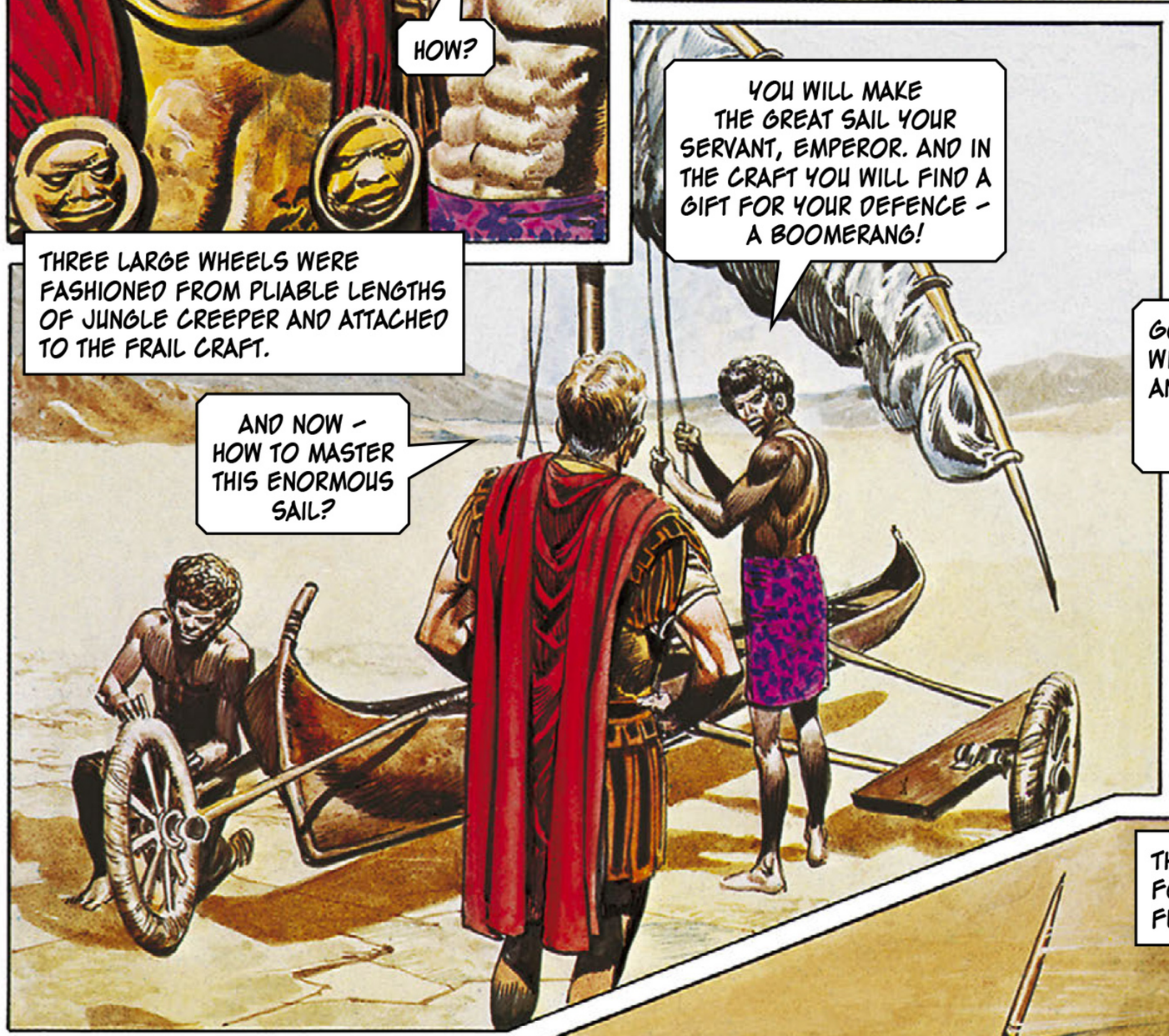

IT WAS DAWN WHEN THEY UNBOUND HIM AND DRAGGED HIM AWAY. THE YULAS DID NOT SPEAK THE COMMON TONGUE OF ELEKTON AND TRIGO'S WORDS WERE GIBBERISH IN THEIR EARS.
I AM THE EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS! FREE ME! FREE ME, DO YOU HEAR - AND YOU WILL BE WELL REWARDED!

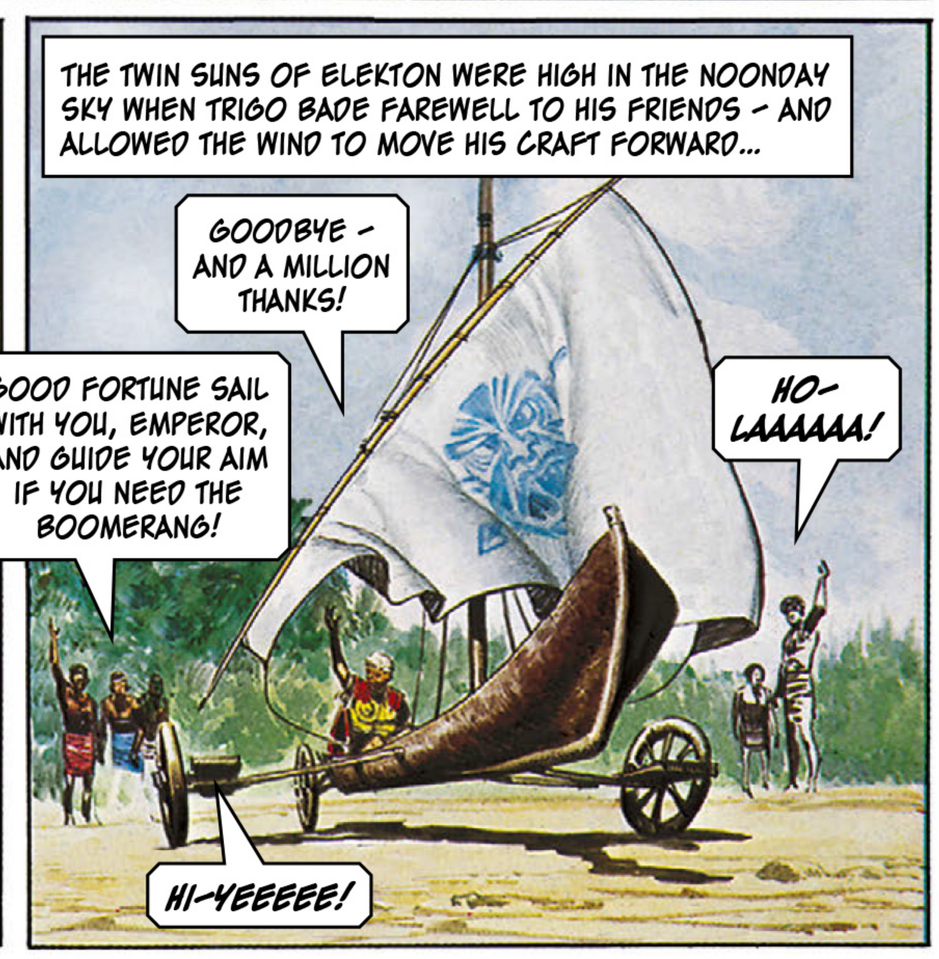
THEN HE SAW HIS AWFUL FATE!
THEY ARE GOING TO SACRIFICE ME IN FIRE TO THEIR GOD!


AND THEN – STRANGE OBJECTS FLICKERED THROUGH THE AIR!
UUUUUH!
AAAAGH!
AND A MASS OF CHEERING FIGURES SWEPT THROUGH THE ENCAMPMENT!
NO! NO-O-O-O-O!
HI-YEEEEEE!
HO-LAAAAAAA!
TRIGO WAS KNOCKED HEADLONG IN THE PANIC-STRICKEN FLIGHT OF THE YULAS. THE NEWCOMERS WERE SOON MASTERS OF THE CAMP.
NO! SPARE THAT ONE! HE IS A TRIGAN!
THESE MEN WERE TARANTAS – DREADED CORSAIRS OF THE GULF OF VORG AND SWORN ENEMIES OF THE YULAS, ALTHOUGH FRIENDLY TO THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
BY THE DEMONS OF THE DEEP! IT IS THE EMPEROR HIMSELF!
TRIGO STRODE WITH THE CORSAIR LEADER DOWN TO THE BEACH, WHERE THE FAMOUS, FAST-SAILING TARANTA SKIFFS LAY THICKLY IN THE SHALLOWS. HE TOLD OF HIS PROBLEM.
I WOULD GIVE MY RIGHT HAND TO HELP YOU, EMPEROR, FOR YOUR PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS TREATED US JUSTLY.
I MUST NOW CROSS THE DESERT OF DOOM – AS SEAFARING PEOPLE, YOU CAN OFFER LITTLE IN THE WAY OF HELP IN THAT DIRECTION!

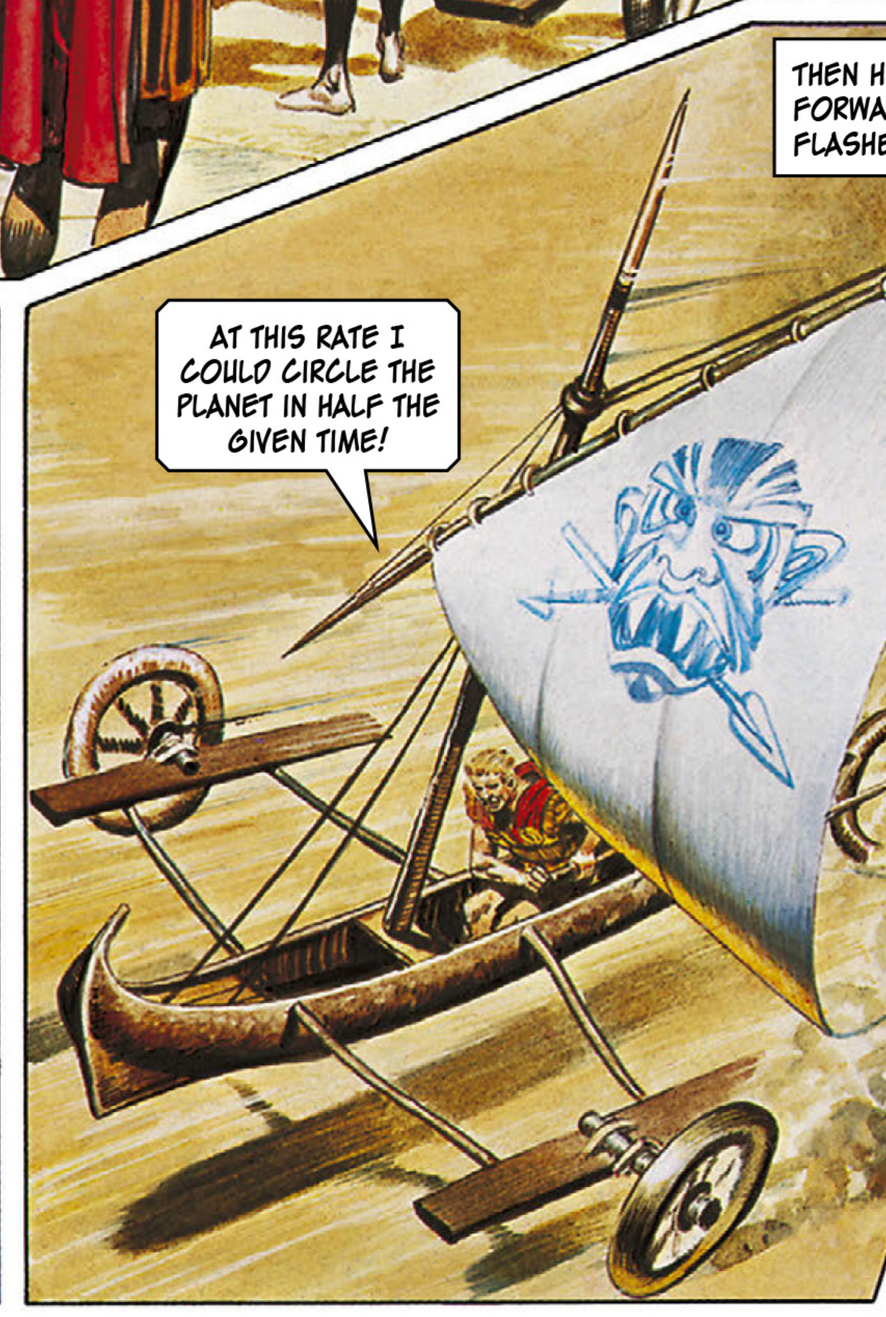
BY ALL THE STARS! YOU CAN HELP!
HOW?

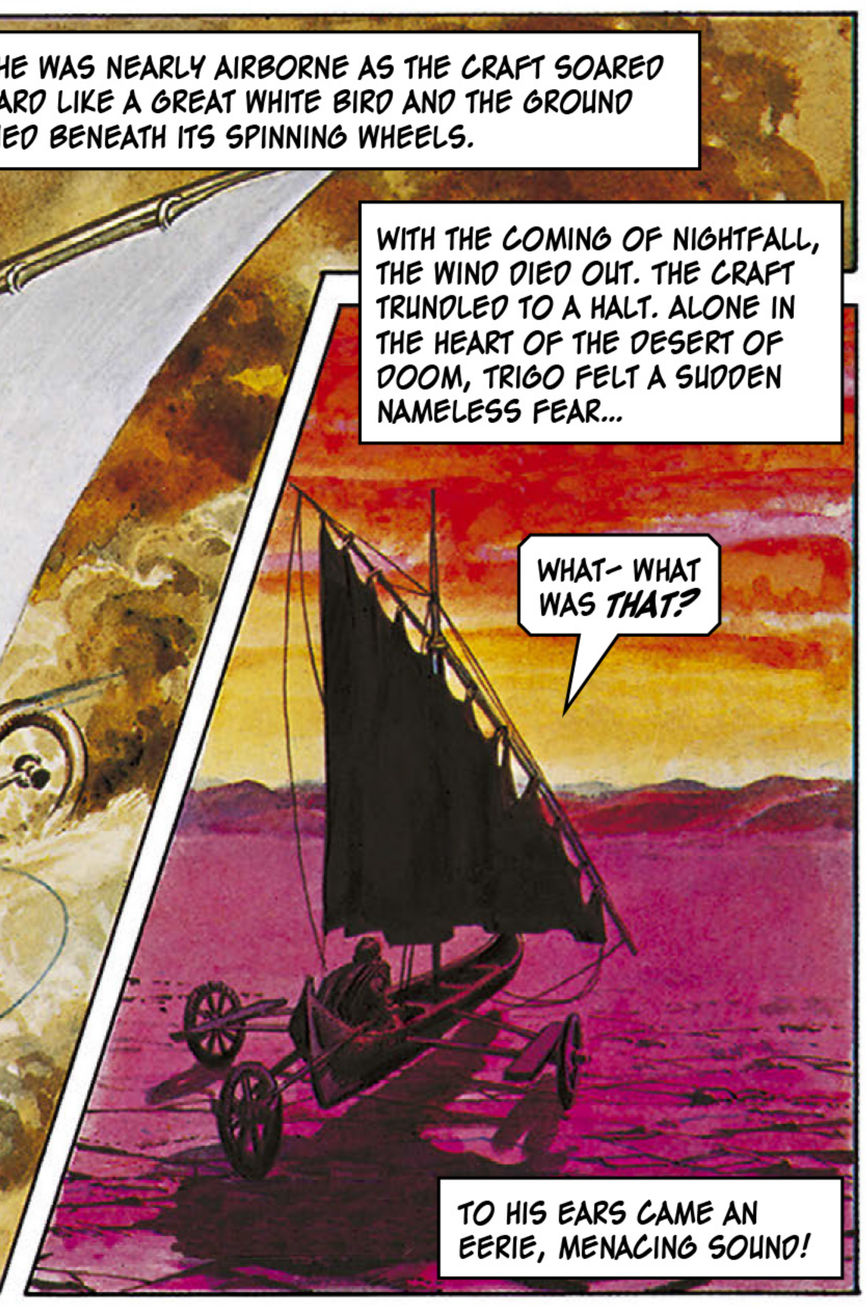

TRIGO POINTED TO ONE OF THE CRAFT. IN MOMENTS, HE HAD MADE HIS NEEDS CLEAR TO THE TARANTA LEADER.
YOU FOLLOW ME? WHEELS!
BY THE HORNED GOD OF THE SEA BOTTOM! YOU ARE RIGHT, EMPEROR!

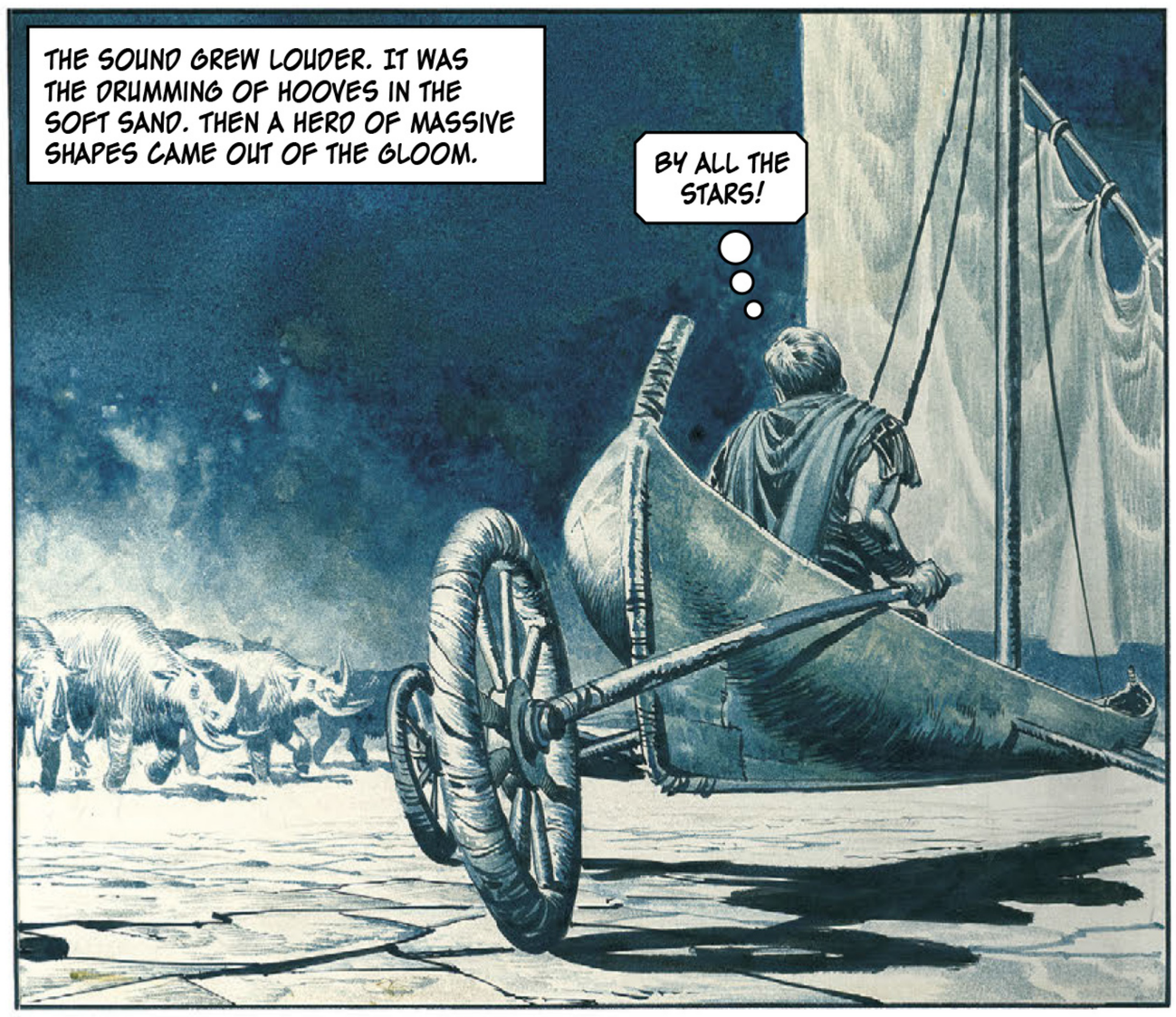

YOU WILL MAKE THE GREAT SAIL YOUR SERVANT, EMPEROR. AND IN THE CRAFT YOU WILL FIND A GIFT FOR YOUR DEFENCE – A BOOMERANG!
THREE LARGE WHEELS WERE FASHIONED FROM PLIABLE LENGTHS OF JUNGLE CREEPER AND ATTACHED TO THE FRAIL CRAFT.
AND NOW – HOW TO MASTER THIS ENORMOUS SAIL?


THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE HIGH IN THE NOONDAY SKY WHEN TRIGO BADE FAREWELL TO HIS FRIENDS – AND ALLOWED THE WIND TO MOVE HIS CRAFT FORWARD...
GOODBYE – AND A MILLION THANKS!
GOOD FORTUNE SAIL WITH YOU, EMPEROR, AND GUIDE YOUR AIM IF YOU NEED THE BOOMERANG!
HO-LAAAAAA!
HI-YEEEEE!

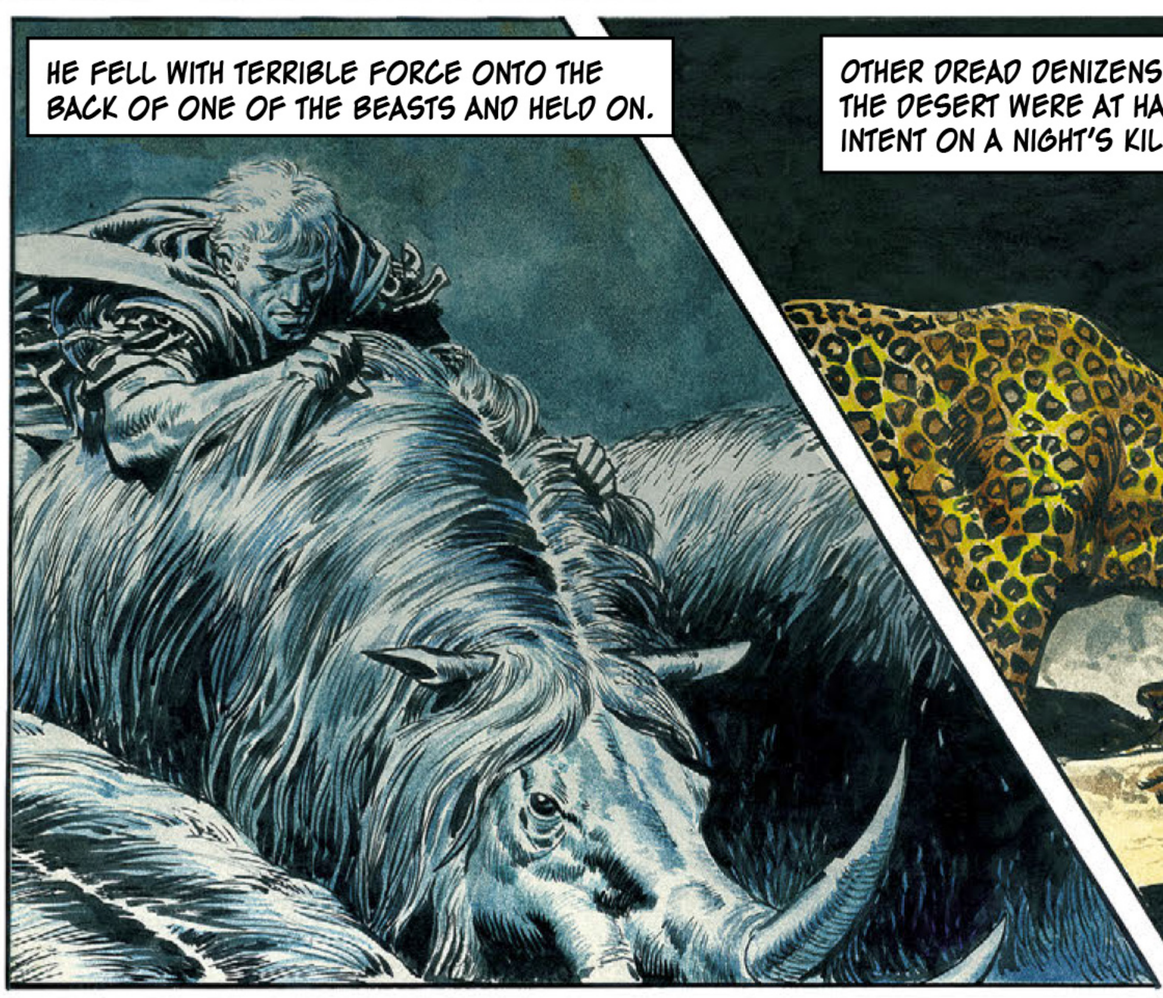
OUT IN THE GLARING WHITE SAND, THE WIND TOOK HIS SAILS – AND TRIGO'S HEART GAVE A LURCH!
NOW FOR IT!

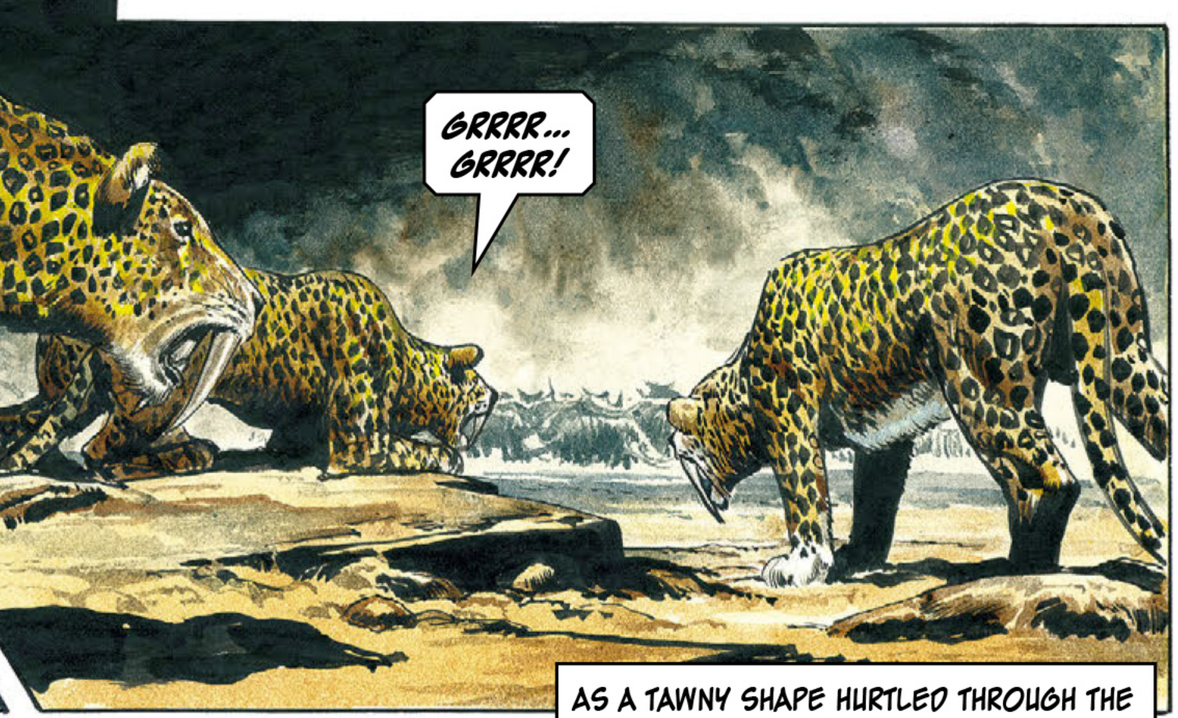

THEN HE WAS NEARLY AIRBORNE AS THE CRAFT SOARED FORWARD LIKE A GREAT WHITE BIRD AND THE GROUND FLASHED BENEATH ITS SPINNING WHEELS.
AT THIS RATE I COULD CIRCLE THE PLANET IN HALF THE GIVEN TIME!

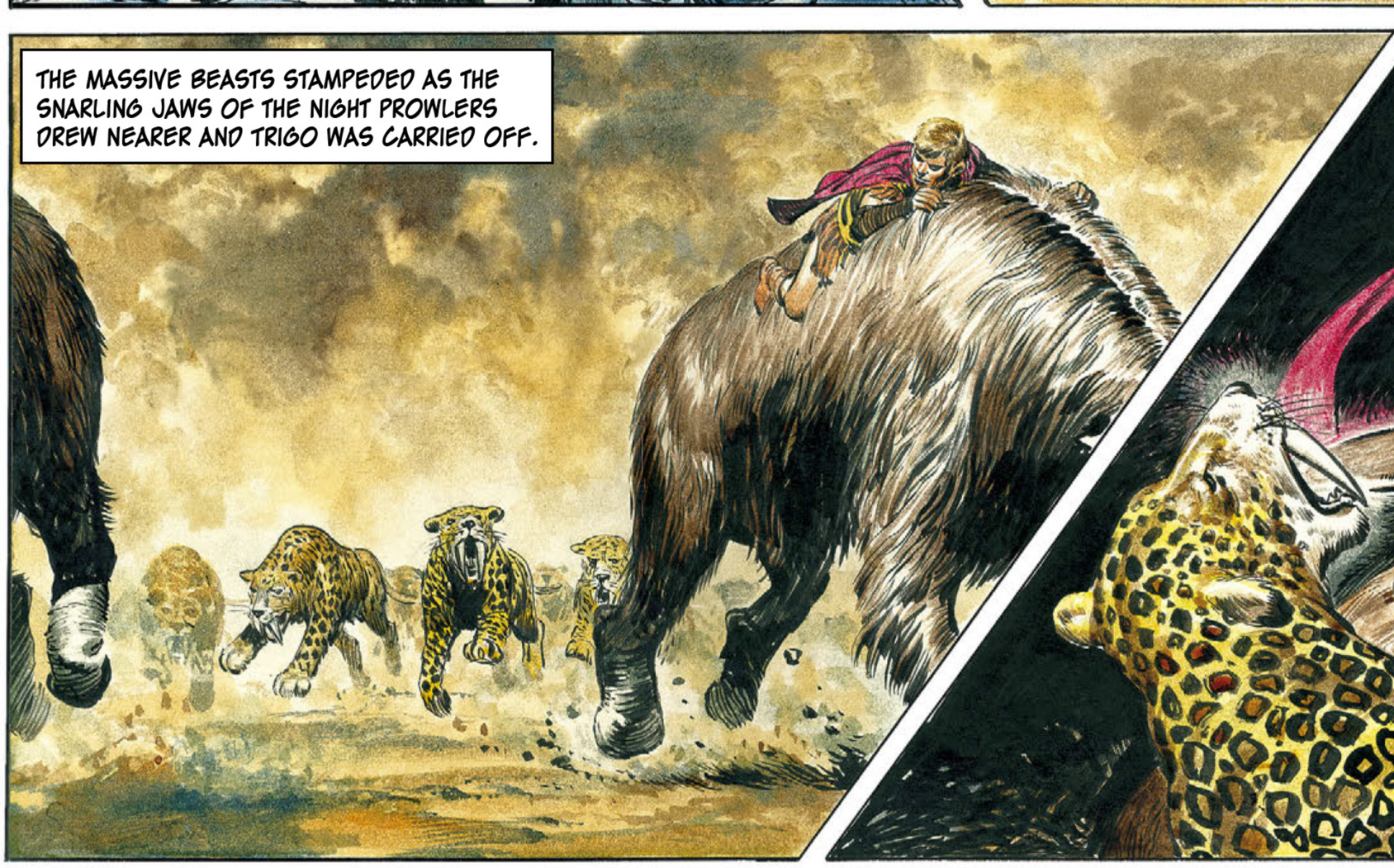

WITH THE COMING OF NIGHTFALL, THE WIND DIED OUT. THE CRAFT TRUNDLED TO A HALT. ALONE IN THE HEART OF THE DESERT OF DOOM, TRIGO FELT A SUDDEN NAMELESS FEAR...
WHAT– WHAT WAS THAT?
TO HIS EARS CAME AN EERIE, MENACING SOUND!


THE SOUND GREW LOUDER. IT WAS THE DRUMMING OF HOOVES IN THE SOFT SAND. THEN A HERD OF MASSIVE SHAPES CAME OUT OF THE GLOOM.
BY ALL THE STARS!

TRIGO'S ATTEMPT TO FLEE WAS TOO LATE. HE WAS TOSSED HIGH INTO THE AIR!
AAAAAAGH!


HE FELL WITH TERRIBLE FORCE ONTO THE BACK OF ONE OF THE BEASTS AND HELD ON.


OTHER DREAD DENIZENS OF THE DESERT WERE AT HAND – INTENT ON A NIGHT'S KILL!
GRRRR... GRRRR!


THE MASSIVE BEASTS STAMPEDED AS THE SNARLING JAWS OF THE NIGHT PROWLERS DREW NEARER AND TRIGO WAS CARRIED OFF.

AS A TAWNY SHAPE HURTLED THROUGH THE AIR TOWARDS HIM, THE TRIGAN EMPEROR FLUNG HIS BOOMERANG...
TAKE THAT!

THE PREDATORS DID NOT GIVE UP THE CHASE UNTIL DAWN WHEN THE HERO CHECKED ITS HEADLONG PACE. THEY CAME TO A BRIDGE THAT SPANNED A GORGE.
I HAVE BEEN BROUGHT FAR AND IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION – THAT IS THE RIVER DOWN WHICH I MUST JOURNEY.

HALFWAY ACROSS THE BRIDGE, TRIGO RAISED HIMSELF TO HIS FEET AND LEAPED INTO THE ABYSS!

THE ICY IMPACT DROVE THE BREATH FROM HIS LUNGS. SURFACING, HE SNATCHED AT A PASSING TREE BRANCH.
I MUST REACH THE LOG...

HE JOURNEYED THEN AT THE BREATHTAKING SPEED OF THE RAPIDS. HE WAS HURLED OVER WATERFALLS...

...EVADED THE SNAPPING JAWS OF RIVER MONSTER...

...UNTIL, FINALLY, HE FOUND HIMSELF IN STILL WATER, WHERE HE WEARILY WALKED ASHORE.

AND THERE HE THREW HIMSELF DOWN ON A NARROW STRIP OF SAND.
I CAN AFFORD A BRIEF REST...

TRIGO SLEPT THE SLEEP OF THE UTTERLY WEARY AND, AS HE SLEPT – THEY CAME!

TRIGO WAS WOKEN UP AND DRAGGED TOWARDS A CAVE. HE KNEW HIS CAPTORS TO BE VERY PRIMITIVE CREATURES, FATED TO LIVE A WAY OF LIFE THAT HAD PASSED A HUNDRED MILLENNIA AGO.

WAAA-HEE-AAA?

HUGGAAA-HO!

IN THE CAVE, A YOUTH LAY TOSSING WITH A FEVER. IT WAS THEN THAT THE TRIGAN EMPEROR UNDERSTOOD WHAT THE NATIVES WANTED.

THEY WANT ME TO CURE THE POOR BOY. THEY THINK I POSSESS MAGICAL POWERS!

HAA-WAAAA! NAGAAA!

ALL THAT DAY AND THROUGH THE NIGHT, TRIGO TENDED THE SICK BOY, NURSING HIM WITH CARE AND DEVOTION, USING THE SIMPLEST POSSIBLE NATURAL AIDS.

MAY THIS YOUNG LIFE NOT SLIP THROUGH MY HANDS.

ON THE SECOND DAY, COLOUR RETURNED TO THE BOY'S CHEEKS – AND TRIGO KNEW THAT HE HAD WON.

HE WILL LIVE!

WAAAA-HI!

AS ONE MAN THEY FELL AT HIS FEET – AND TRIGO KNEW THAT HE HAD FOUND ALLIES FOR HIS DESPERATE JOURNEY.

YAAAAA! HO-HAAAA!

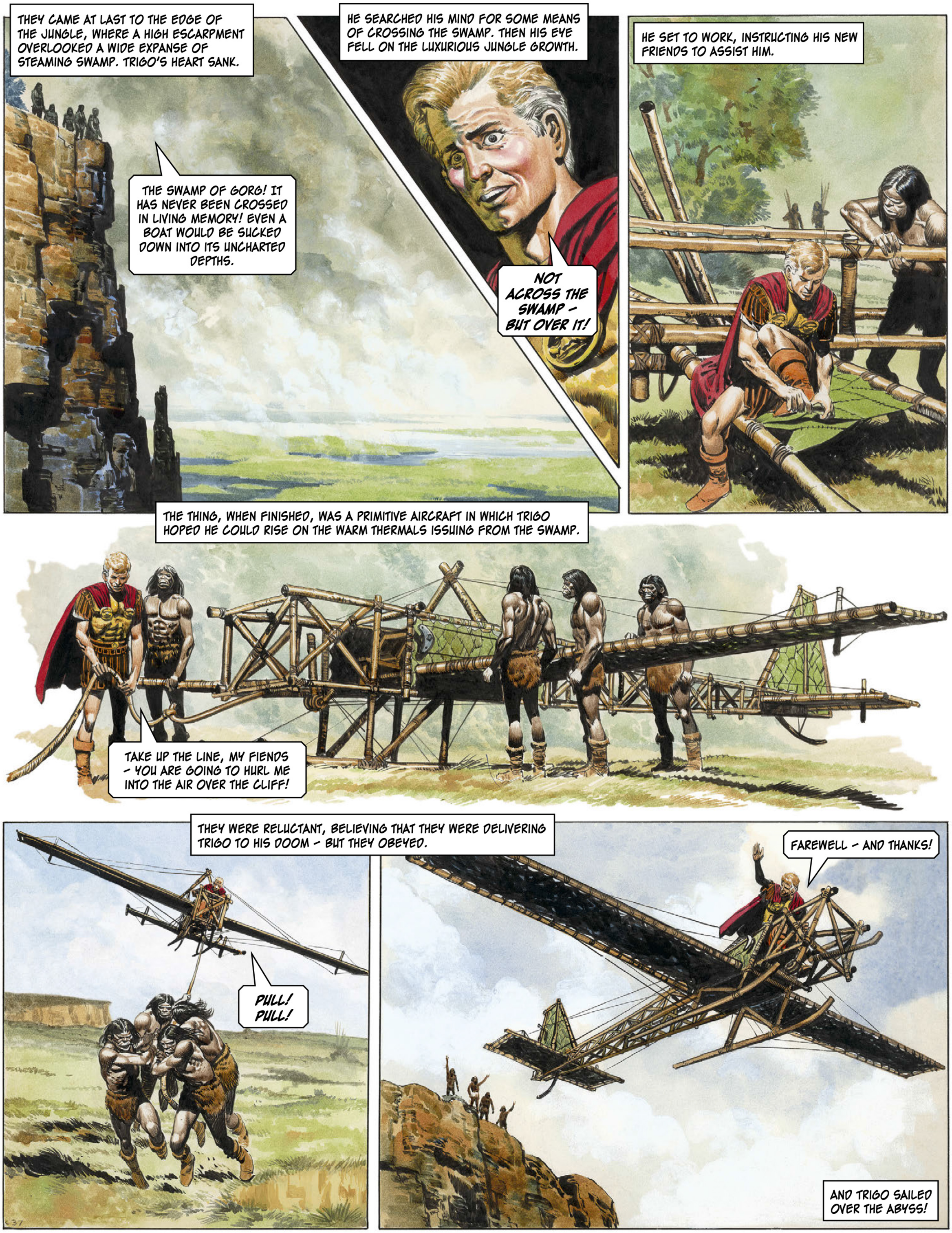
YOU WISH TO REPAY ME? THEN ESCORT ME THROUGH YOUR IMPENETRABLE JUNGLE!

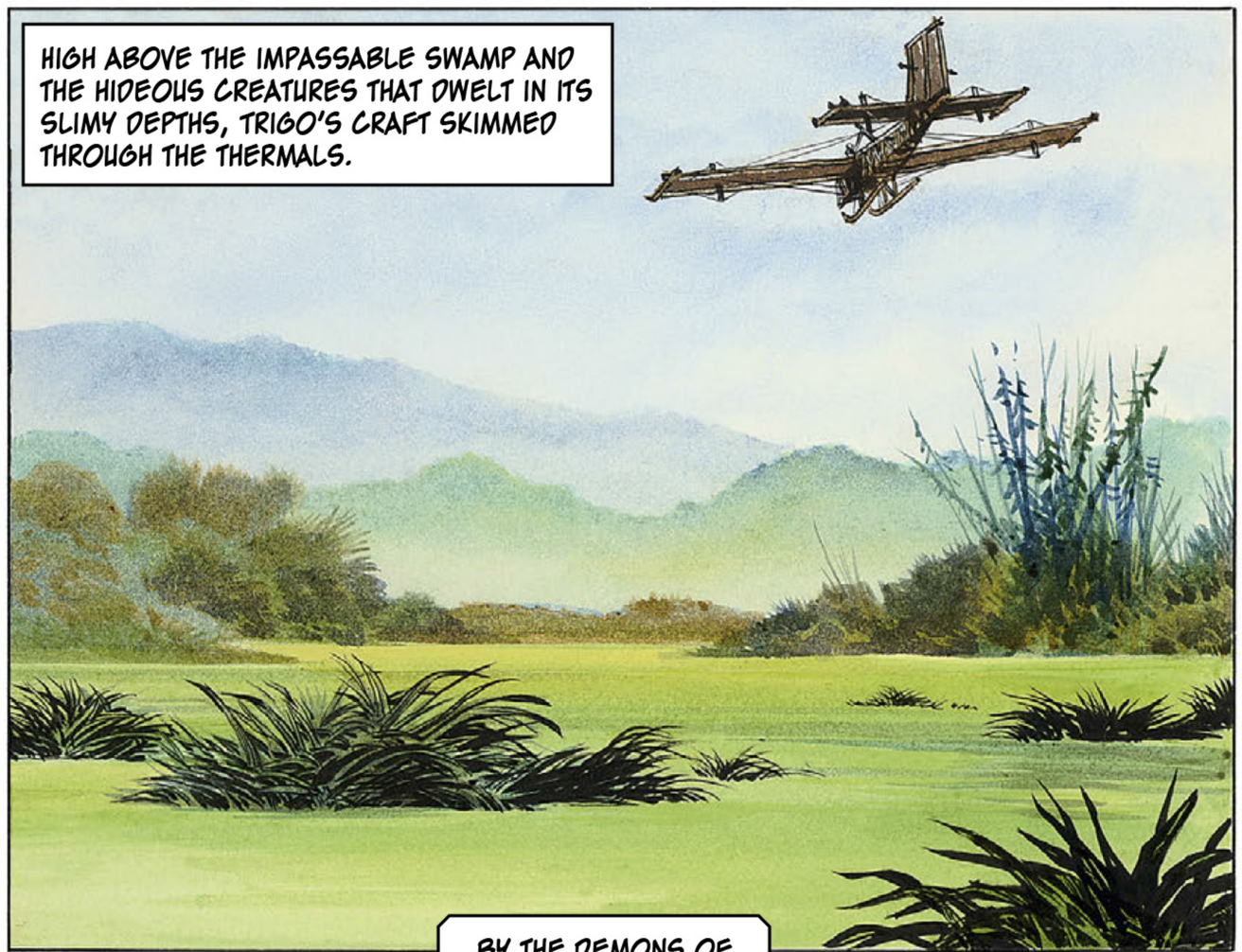
LET'S GO THEN!

BY REPETITION HIS MEANING FINALLY BECAME CLEAR TO THEM AND THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS WAS HOISTED ON TO A PAIR OF BROAD SHOULDERS.

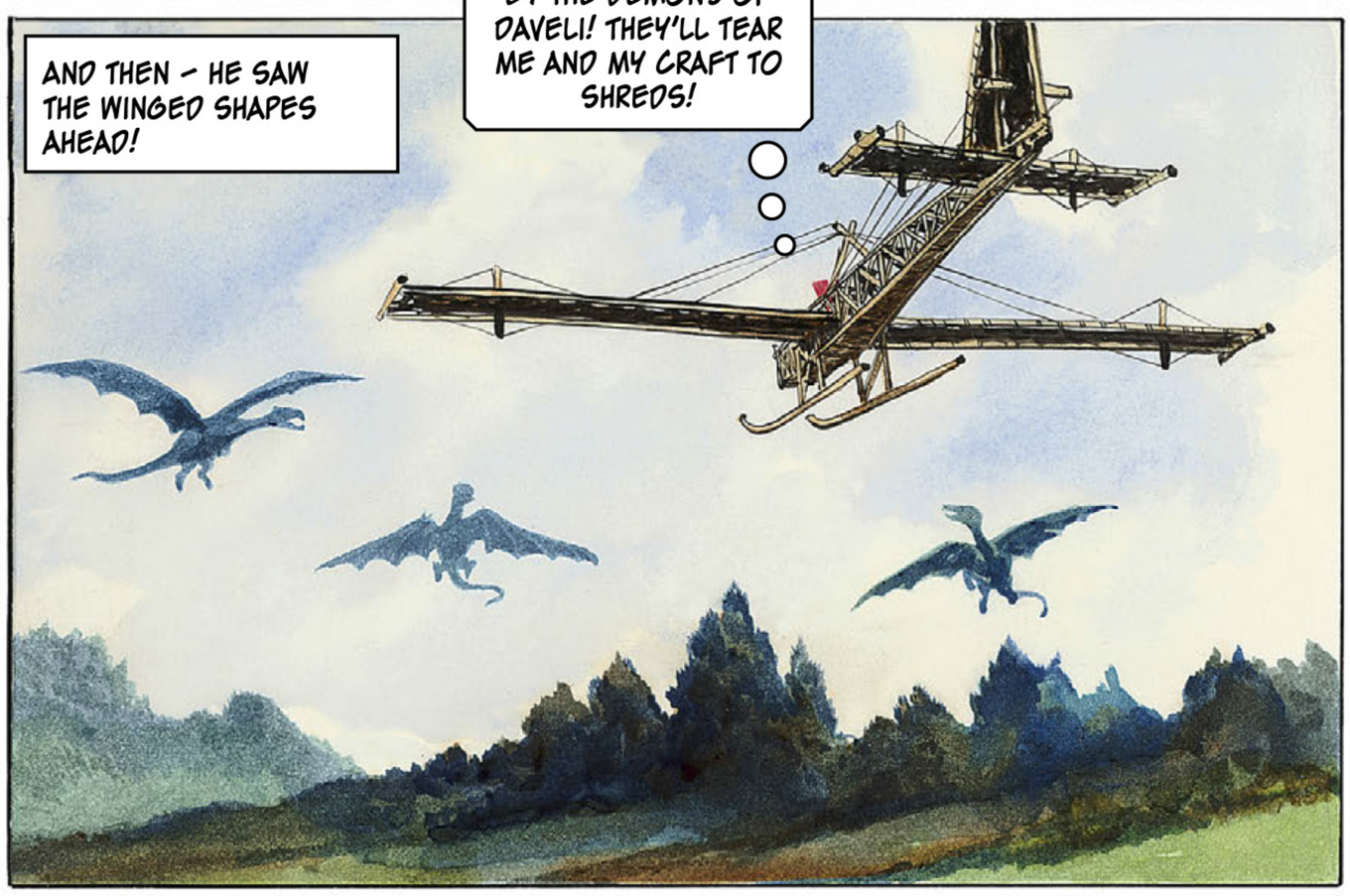
YAAAH-HI!

THE MOST THRILLING EPISODE OF TRIGO'S EPIC JOURNEY THEN BEGAN AS HE WAS BORNE A VAST DISTANCE THROUGH TOWERING JUNGLE TREE-TOPS.


THEY CAME AT LAST TO THE EDGE OF THE JUNGLE, WHERE A HIGH ESCARPMENT OVERLOOKED A WIDE EXPANSE OF STEAMING SWAMP. TRIGO'S HEART SANK.
THE SWAMP OF GORG! IT HAS NEVER BEEN CROSSED IN LIVING MEMORY! EVEN A BOAT WOULD BE SUCKED DOWN INTO ITS UNCHARTED DEPTHS.
HE SEARCHED HIS MIND FOR SOME MEANS OF CROSSING THE SWAMP. THEN HIS EYE FELL ON THE LUXURIOUS JUNGLE GROWTH.
NOT ACROSS THE SWAMP – BUT OVER IT!
HE SET TO WORK, INSTRUCTING HIS NEW FRIENDS TO ASSIST HIM.
THE THING, WHEN FINISHED, WAS A PRIMITIVE AIRCRAFT IN WHICH TRIGO HOPED HE COULD RISE ON THE WARM THERMALS ISSUING FROM THE SWAMP.
TAKE UP THE LINE, MY FIENDS – YOU ARE GOING TO HURL ME INTO THE AIR OVER THE CLIFF!
THEY WERE RELUCTANT, BELIEVING THAT THEY WERE DELIVERING TRIGO TO HIS DOOM – BUT THEY OBEYED.
PULL! PULL!
FAREWELL – AND THANKS!
AND TRIGO SAILED OVER THE ABYSS!

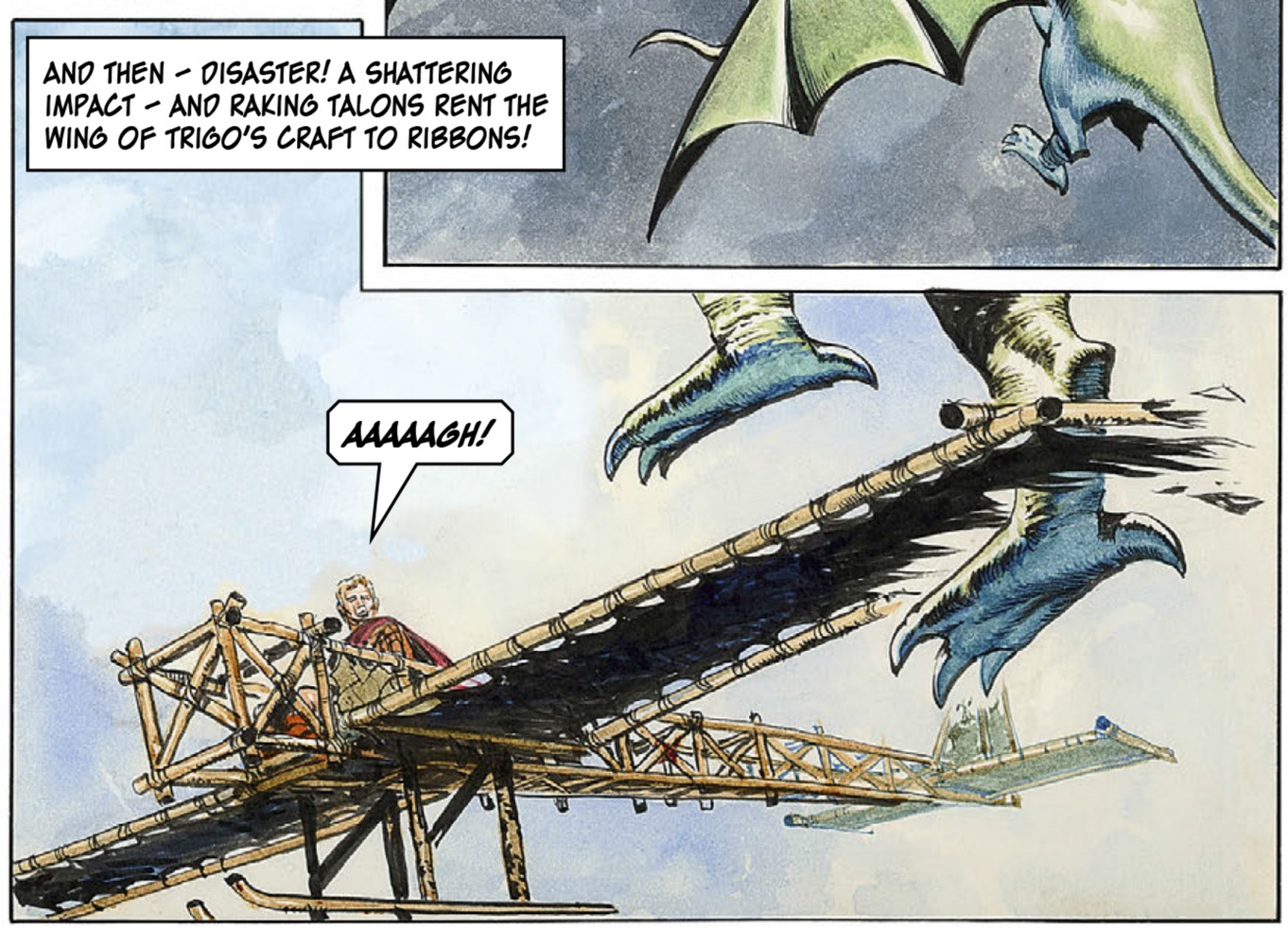

HIGH ABOVE THE IMPASSABLE SWAMP AND THE HIDEOUS CREATURES THAT DWELT IN ITS SLIMY DEPTHS, TRIGO'S CRAFT SKIMMED THROUGH THE THERMALS.

THIS IS THE BEST MEANS OF TRANSPORT I'VE DEVISED. A PITY IT'S TOO SLOW TO CARRY ME TO MY DESTINATION IN TIME.


AND THEN – HE SAW THE WINGED SHAPES AHEAD!
BY THE DEMONS OF DAVELI! THEY'LL TEAR ME AND MY CRAFT TO SHREDS!

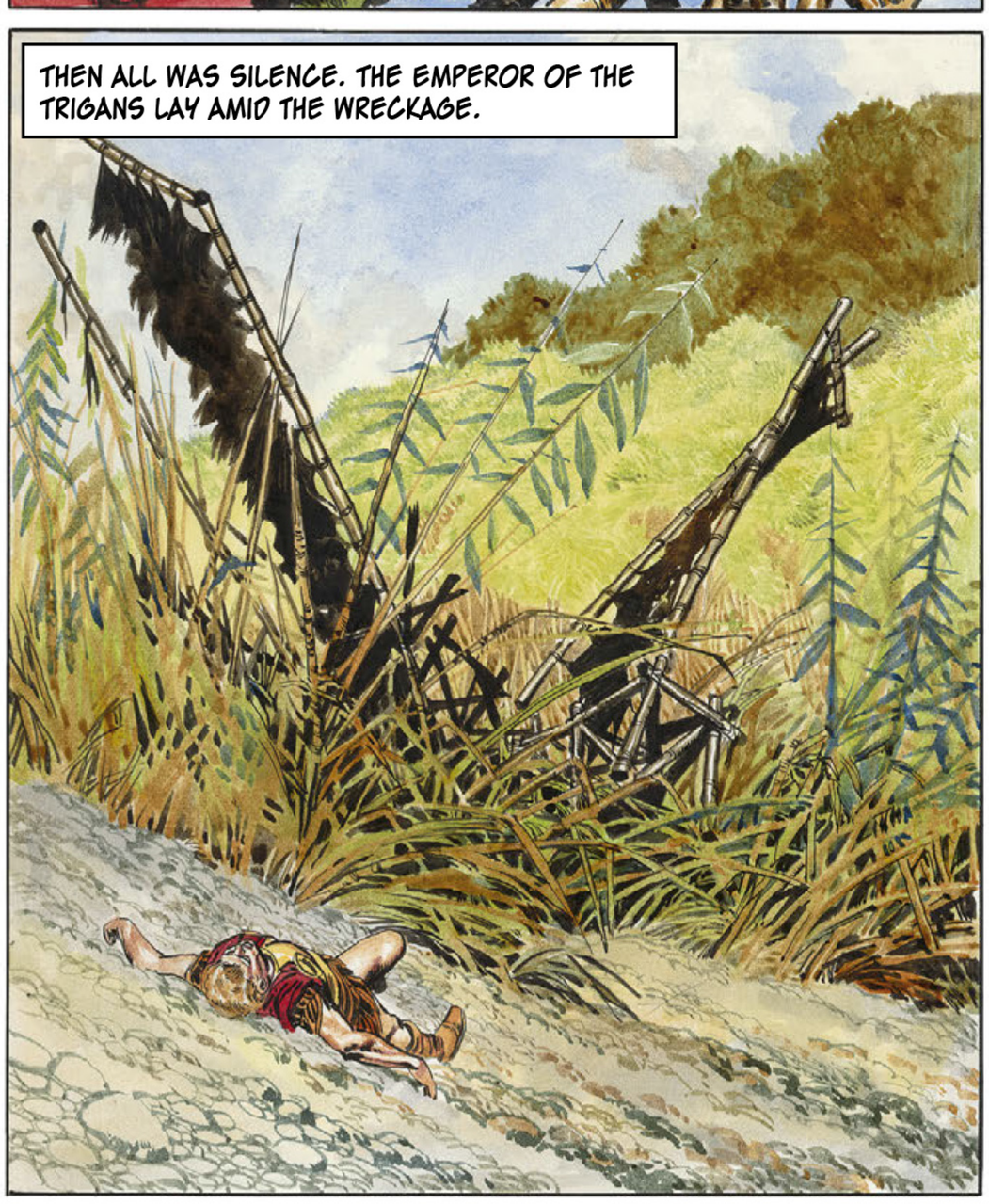
HE WRENCHED AT HIS PRIMITIVE CONTROLS AS THE FIRST OF THE WINGED MONSTERS DIVED UPON HIM.

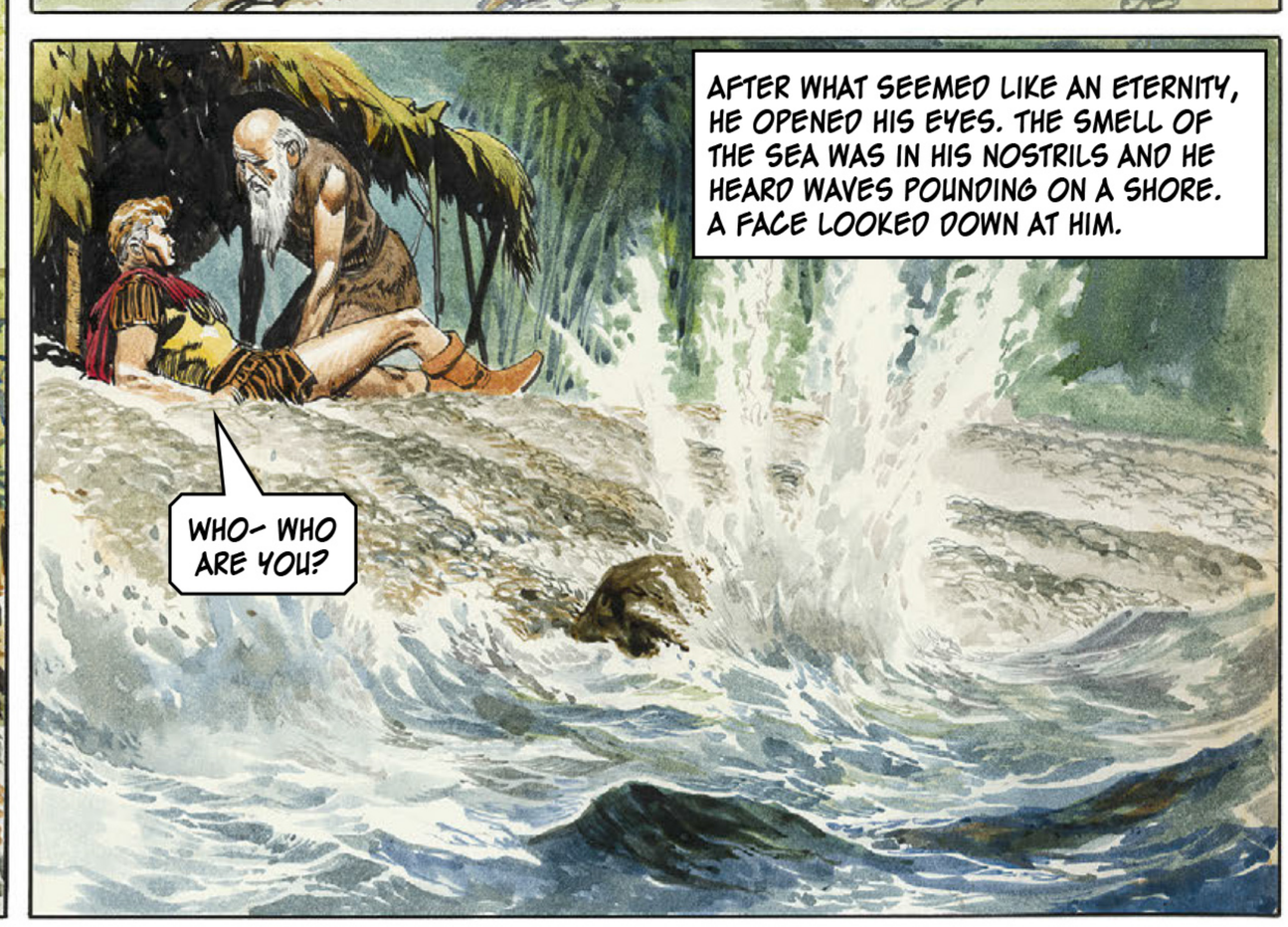
TRIGO'S ONLY FORM OF DEFENCE WAS A SIMPLE SPEAR GIVEN TO HIM BY THE PRIMITIVE TRIBESMEN. HE USED IT TO GOOD EFFECT.

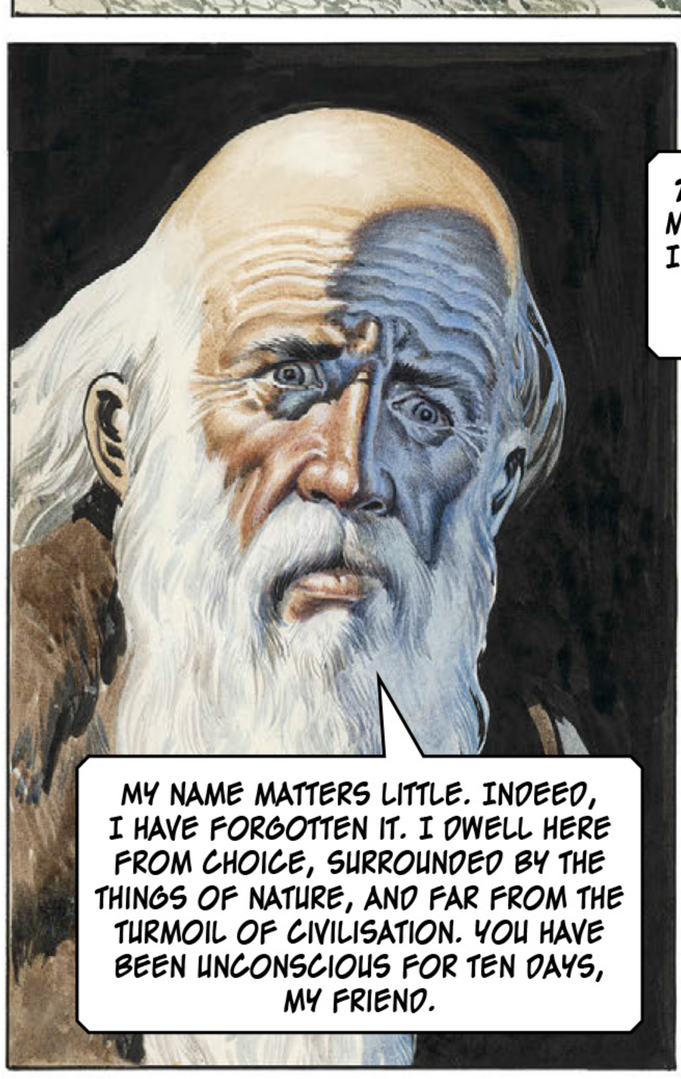

AND THEN – DISASTER! A SHATTERING IMPACT – AND RAKING TALONS RENT THE WING OF TRIGO'S CRAFT TO RIBBONS!
AAAAAGH!

TRIGO SAW THE GROUND SPINNING TOWARDS HIM. HE BOWED HIS HEAD AND WAITED FOR THE END.

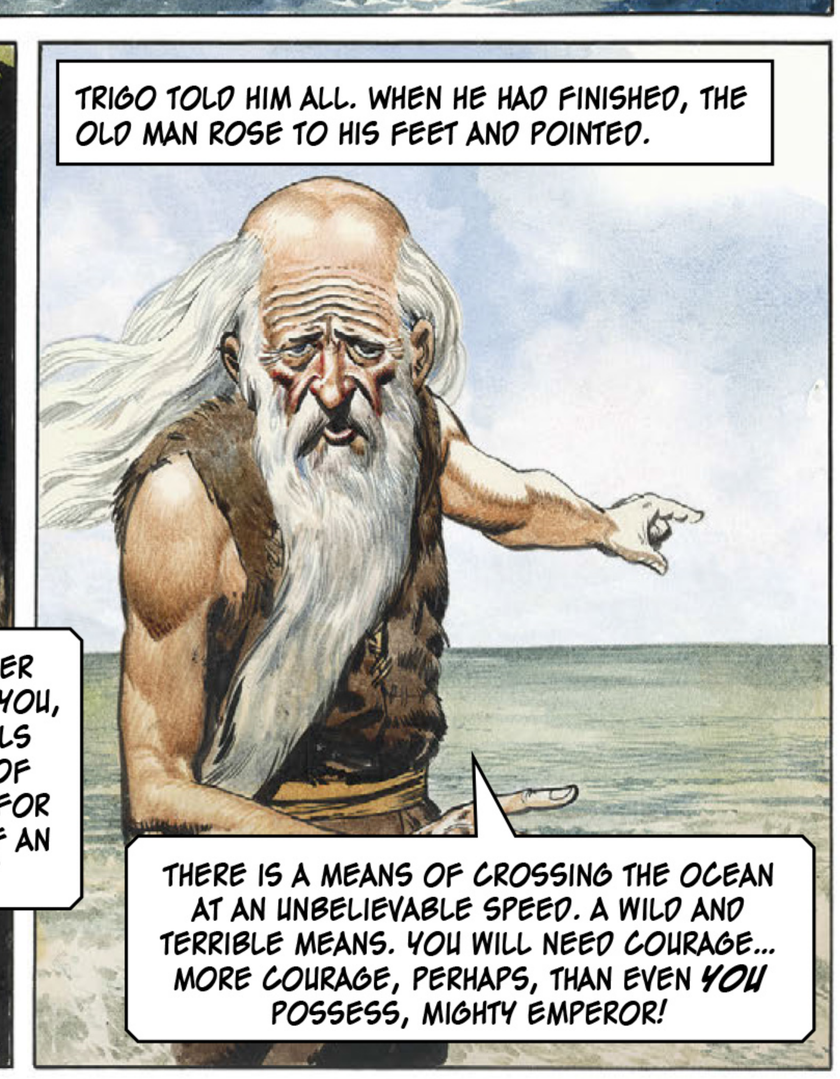
LIKE A BROKEN BIRD, THE CRAFT FLUTTERED OVER THE EXTREME EDGE OF THE SWAMP – AND PLOUGHED THROUGH THE TREES BEYOND.
NOW...!

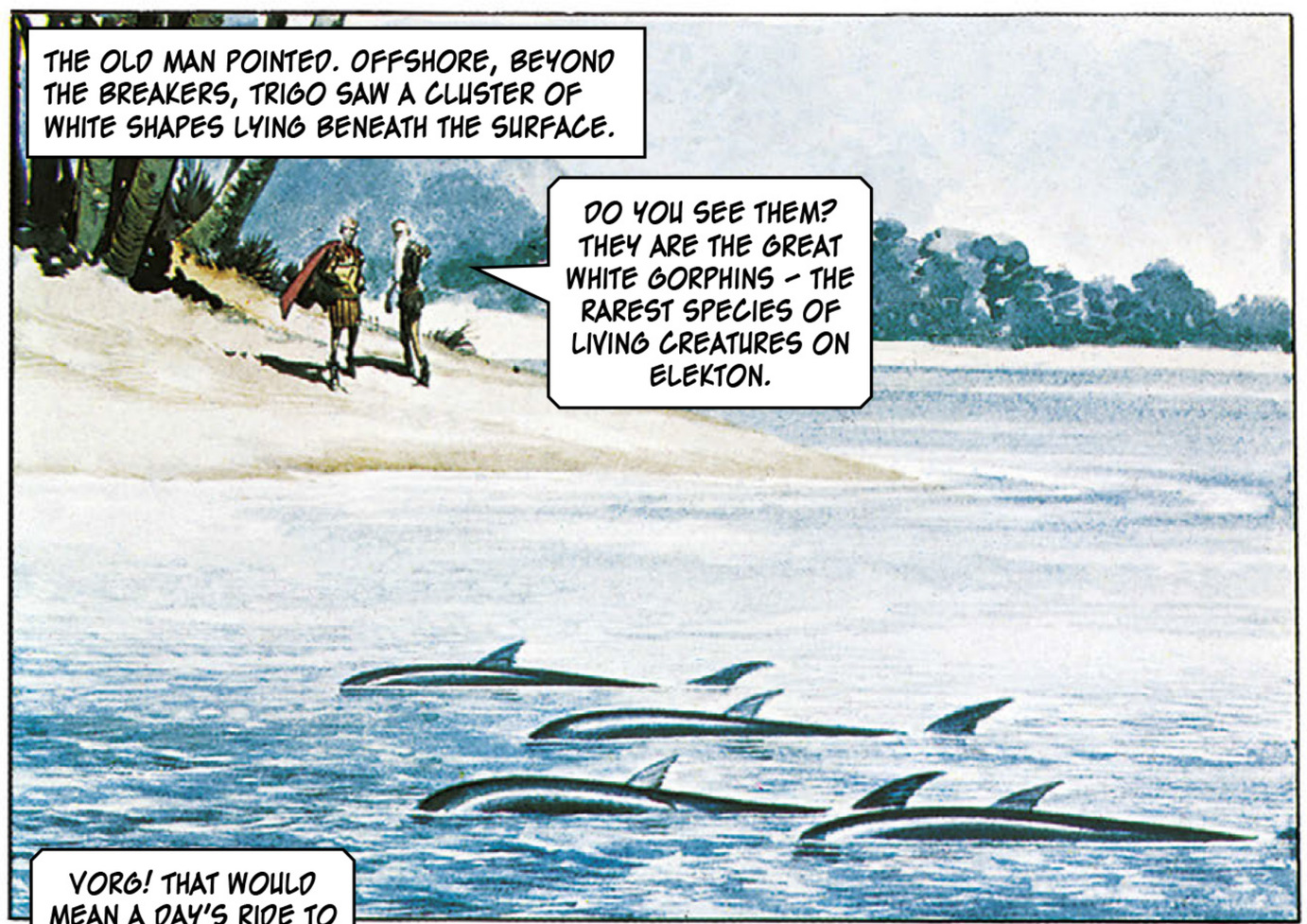

THEN ALL WAS SILENCE. THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS LAY AMID THE WRECKAGE.

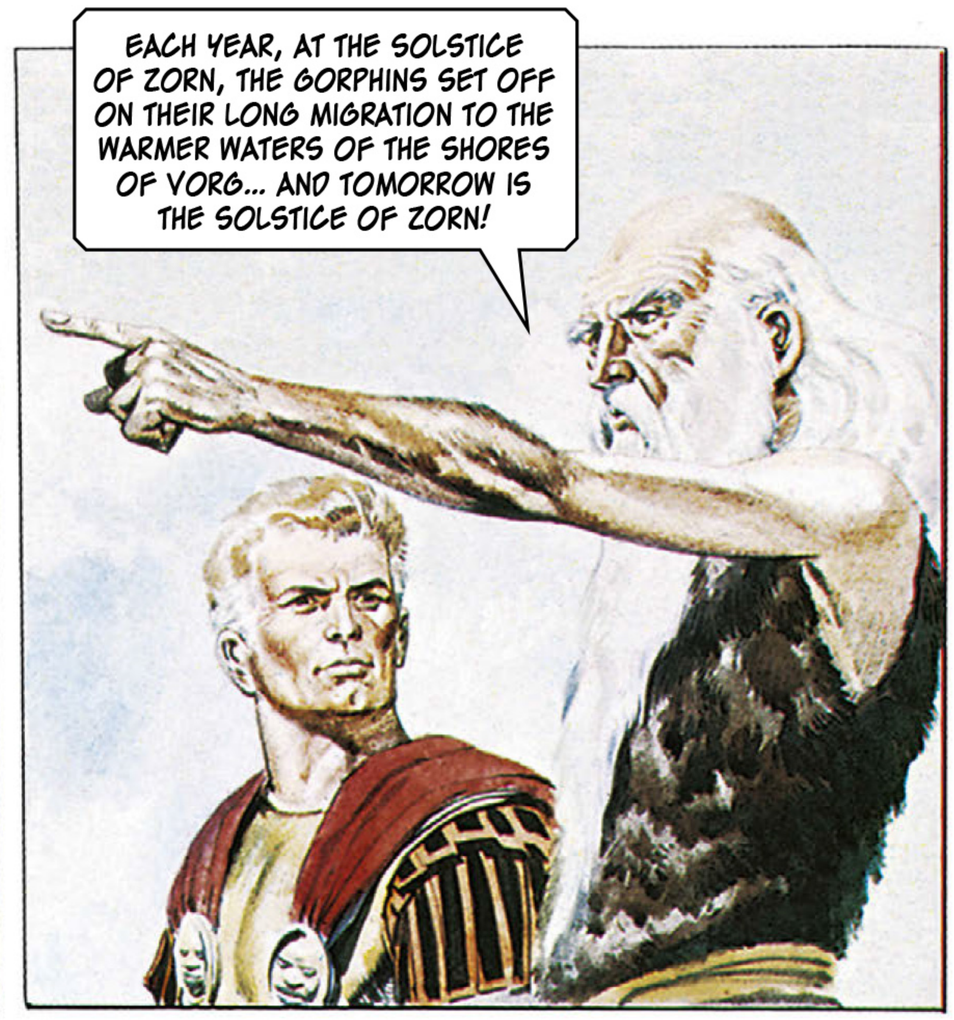

AFTER WHAT SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY, HE OPENED HIS EYES. THE SMELL OF THE SEA WAS IN HIS NOSTRILS AND HE HEARD WAVES POUNDING ON A SHORE. A FACE LOOKED DOWN AT HIM.
WHO– WHO ARE YOU?


MY NAME MATTERS LITTLE. INDEED, I HAVE FORGOTTEN IT. I DWELL HERE FROM CHOICE, SURROUNDED BY THE THINGS OF NATURE, AND FAR FROM THE TURMOIL OF CIVILISATION. YOU HAVE BEEN UNCONSCIOUS FOR TEN DAYS, MY FRIEND.

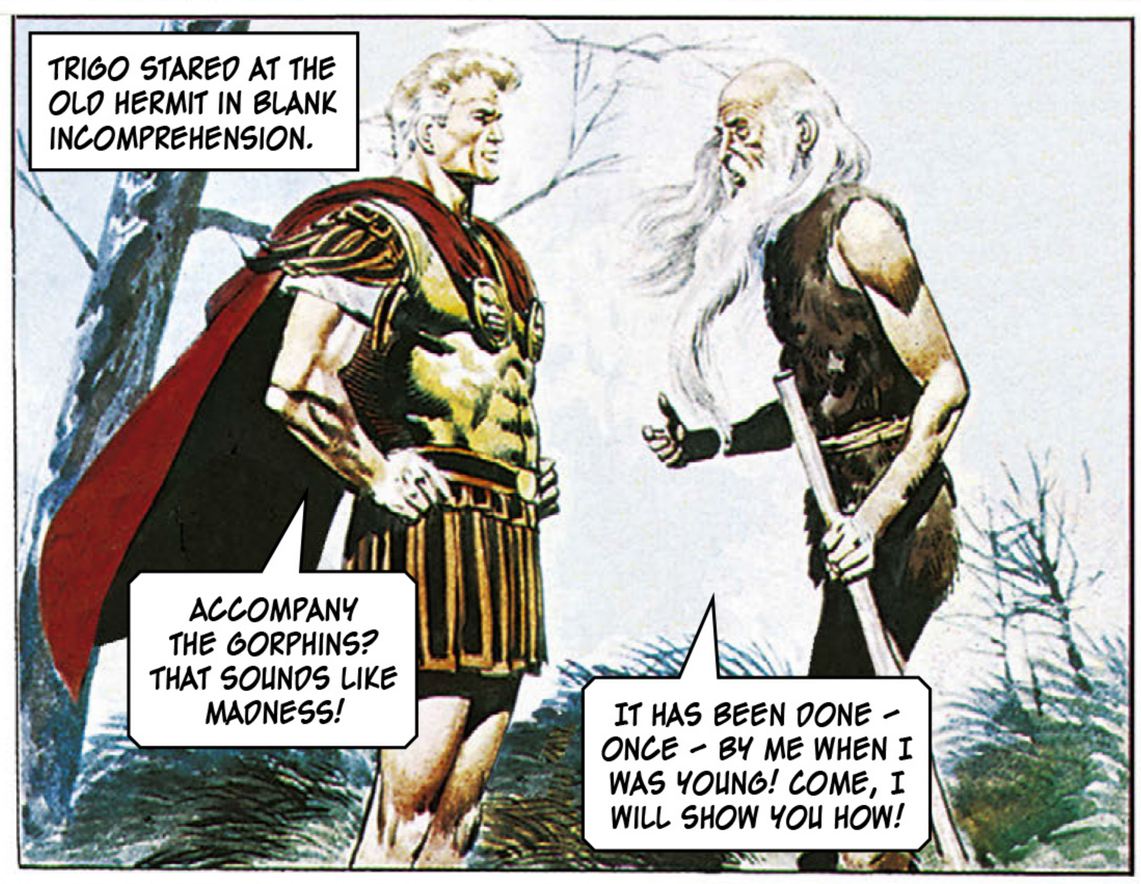
A SHOCK OF DESPAIR CLUTCHED AT TRIGO'S HEART.
TEN DAYS! THEN I HAVE LOST MY EMPIRE! WHAT CHANCE HAVE I NOW OF CROSSING THE GREAT OCEAN IN TIME TO COMPLETE MY TASK?
WHAT MANNER OF MAN ARE YOU, WHO TRAVELS THE FACE OF THE PLANET FOR THE SAKE OF AN EMPIRE?


TRIGO TOLD HIM ALL. WHEN HE HAD FINISHED, THE OLD MAN ROSE TO HIS FEET AND POINTED.
THERE IS A MEANS OF CROSSING THE OCEAN AT AN UNBELIEVABLE SPEED. A WILD AND TERRIBLE MEANS. YOU WILL NEED COURAGE... MORE COURAGE, PERHAPS, THAN EVEN YOU POSSESS, MIGHTY EMPEROR!

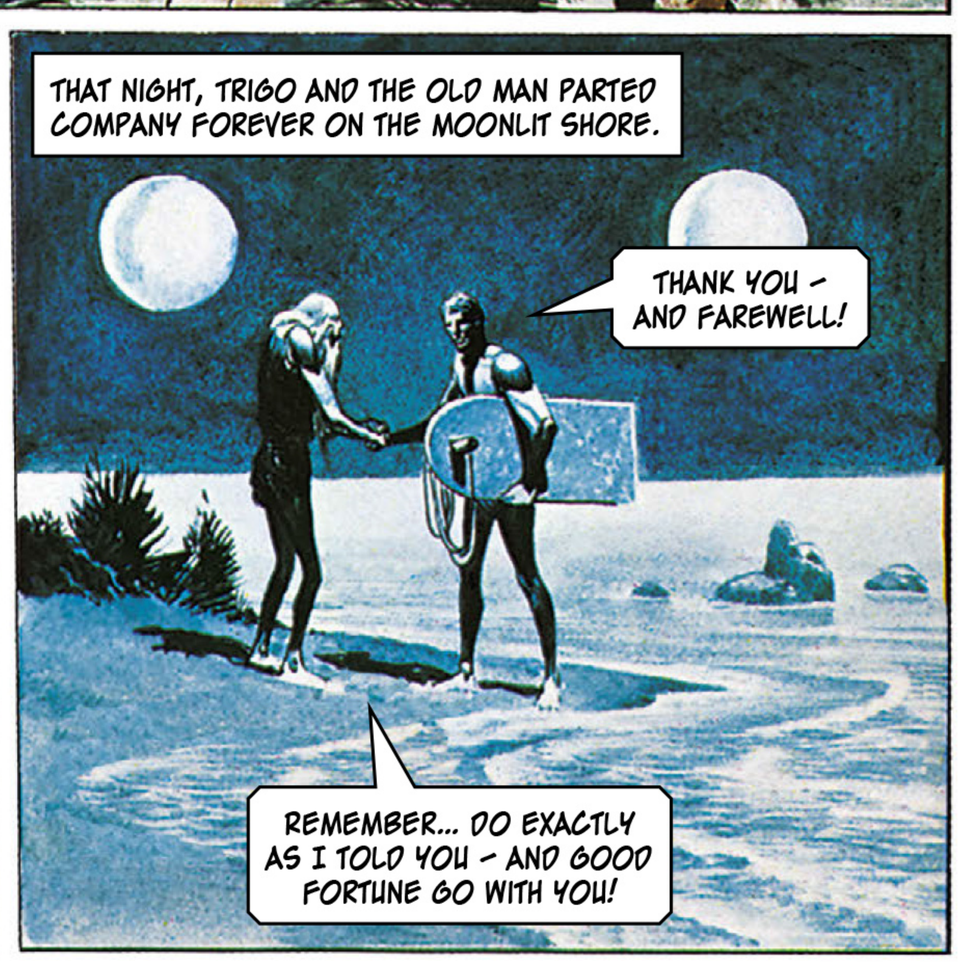

THE OLD MAN POINTED. OFFSHORE, BEYOND THE BREAKERS, TRIGO SAW A CLUSTER OF WHITE SHAPES LYING BENEATH THE SURFACE.
DO YOU SEE THEM? THEY ARE THE GREAT WHITE GORPHINS – THE RAREST SPECIES OF LIVING CREATURES ON ELEKTON.

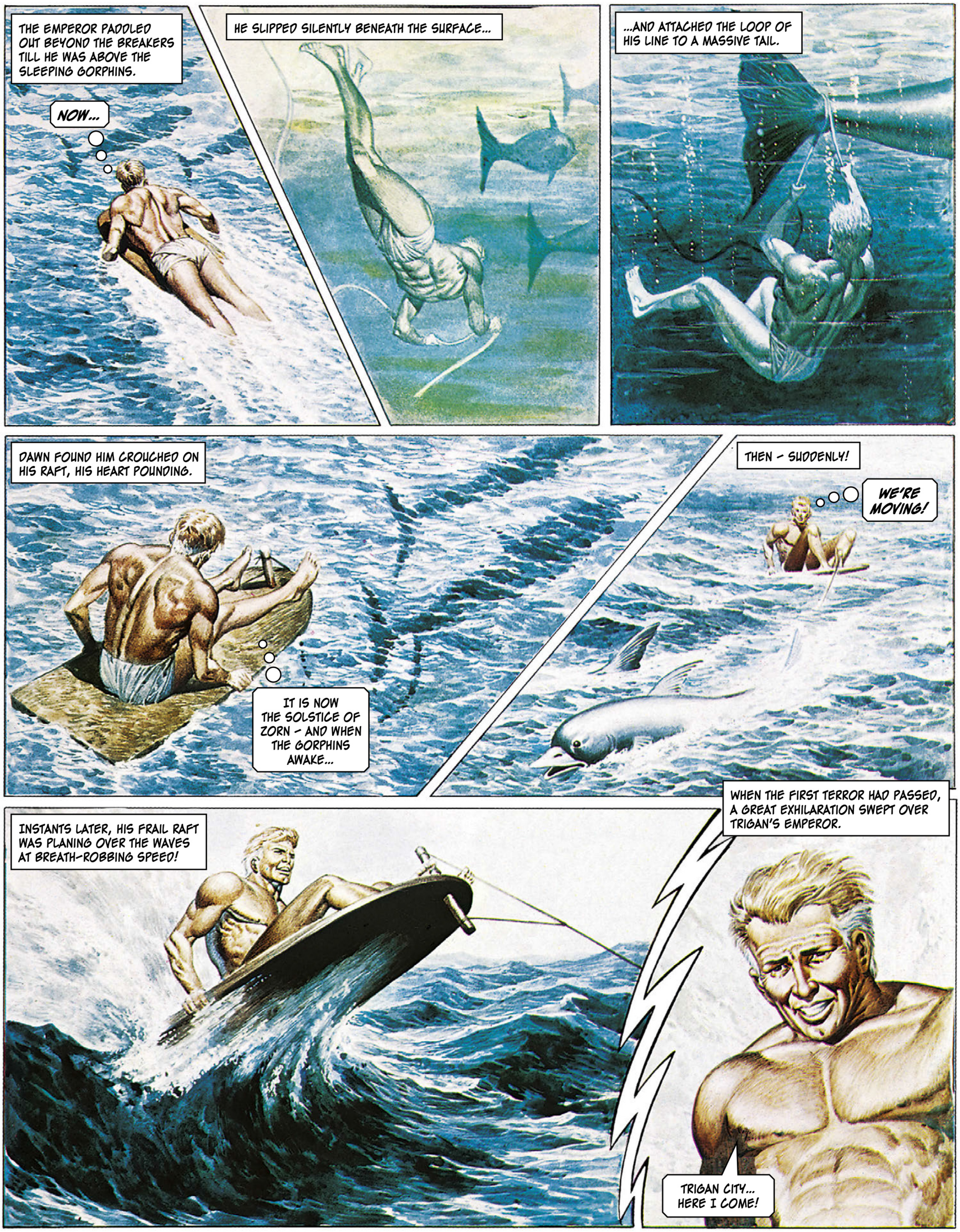

EACH YEAR, AT THE SOLSTICE OF ZORN, THE GORPHINS SET OFF ON THEIR LONG MIGRATION TO THE WARMER WATERS OF THE SHORES OF VORG... AND TOMORROW IS THE SOLSTICE OF ZORN!

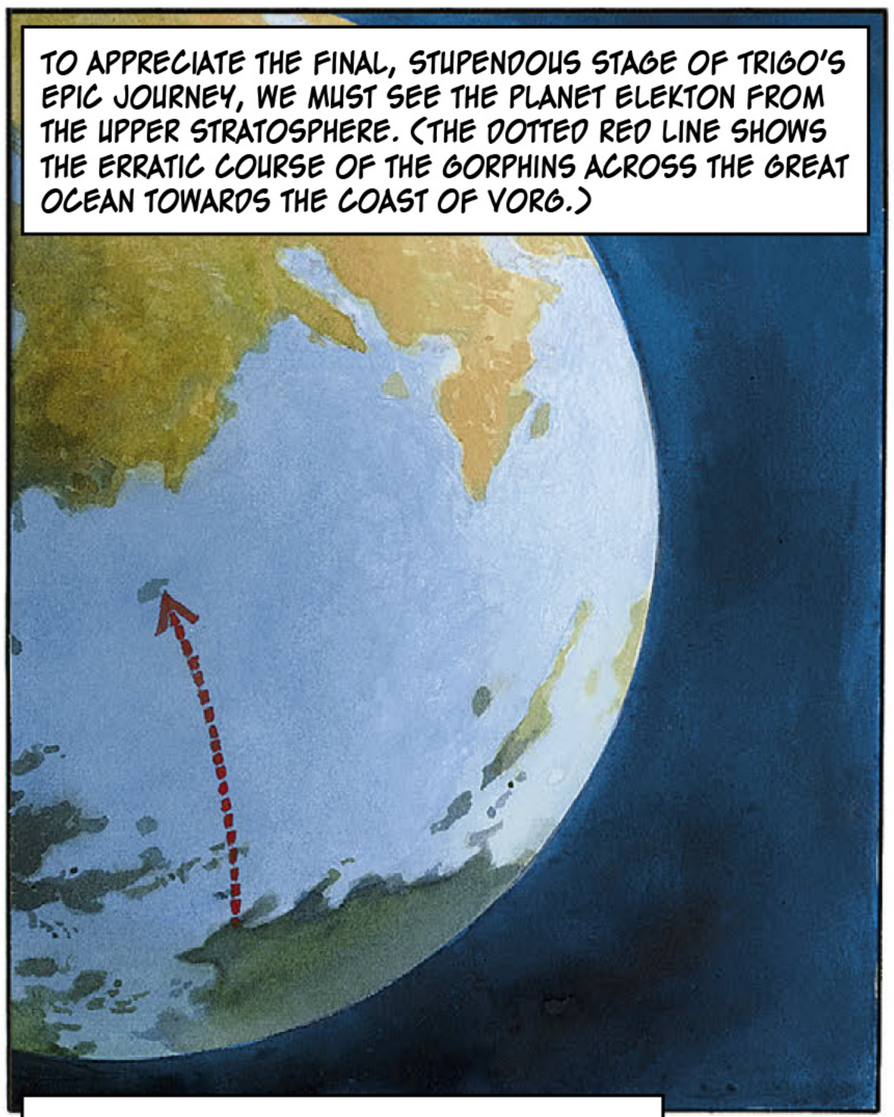
VORG! THAT WOULD MEAN A DAY'S RIDE TO TRIGAN CITY AT MOST!
QUITE SO! IF YOU WERE TO ACCOMPANY THE GORPHINS ON THEIR MIGRATION, YOU COULD BE IN VORG WITHIN EIGHT OR TEN DAYS – IN TIME TO SUCCEED IN YOUR TASK!

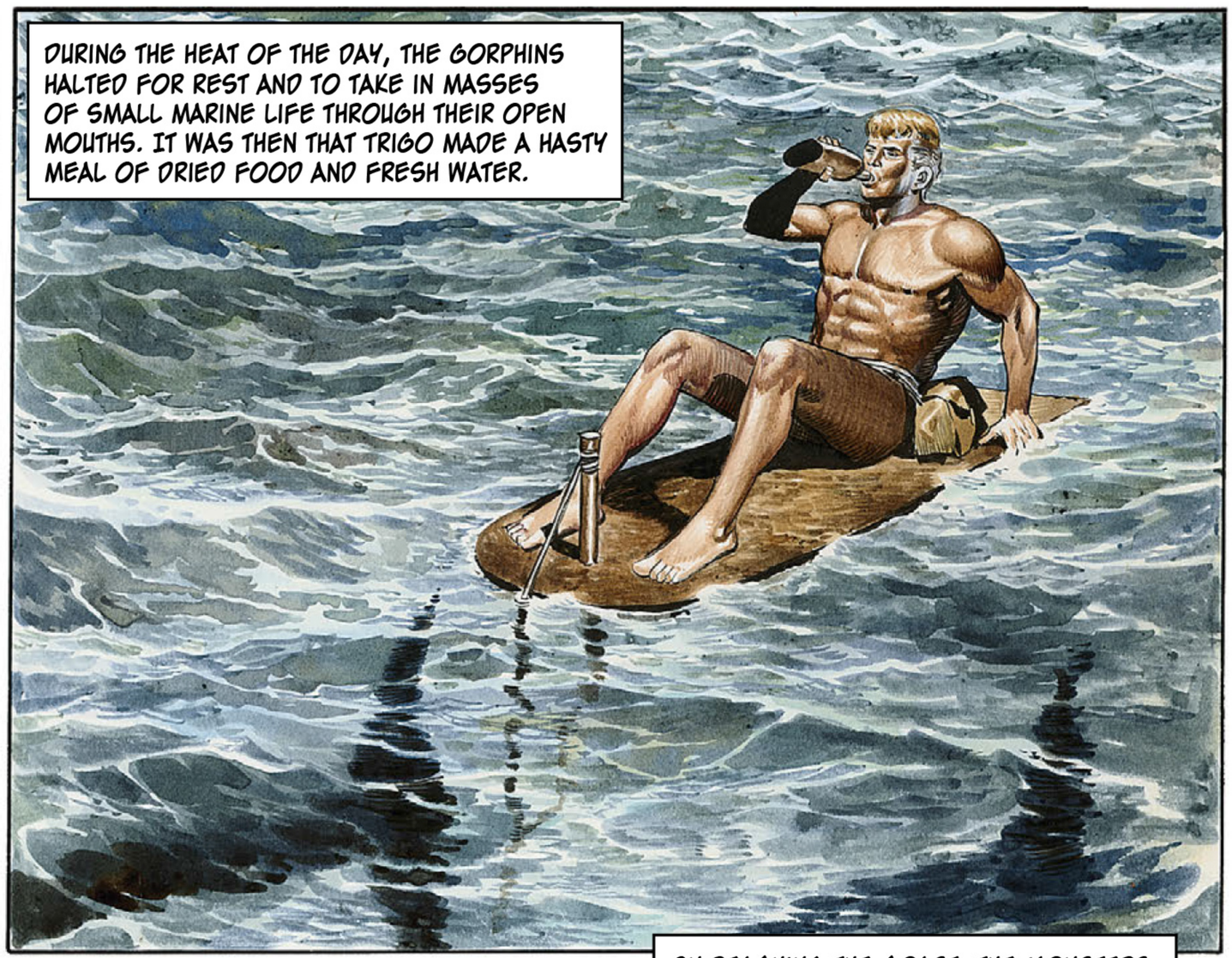

TRIGO STARED AT THE OLD HERMIT IN BLANK INCOMPREHENSION.
ACCOMPANY THE GORPHINS? THAT SOUNDS LIKE MADNESS!
IT HAS BEEN DONE – ONCE – BY ME WHEN I WAS YOUNG! COME, I WILL SHOW YOU HOW!

FOLLOWING THE OLD MAN'S INSTRUCTIONS, TRIGO FASHIONED A CURIOUSLY-SHAPED RAFT.
I STILL SAY IT'S MADNESS!
IT CAN BE DONE, I TELL YOU – BUT IT TAKES COURAGE!

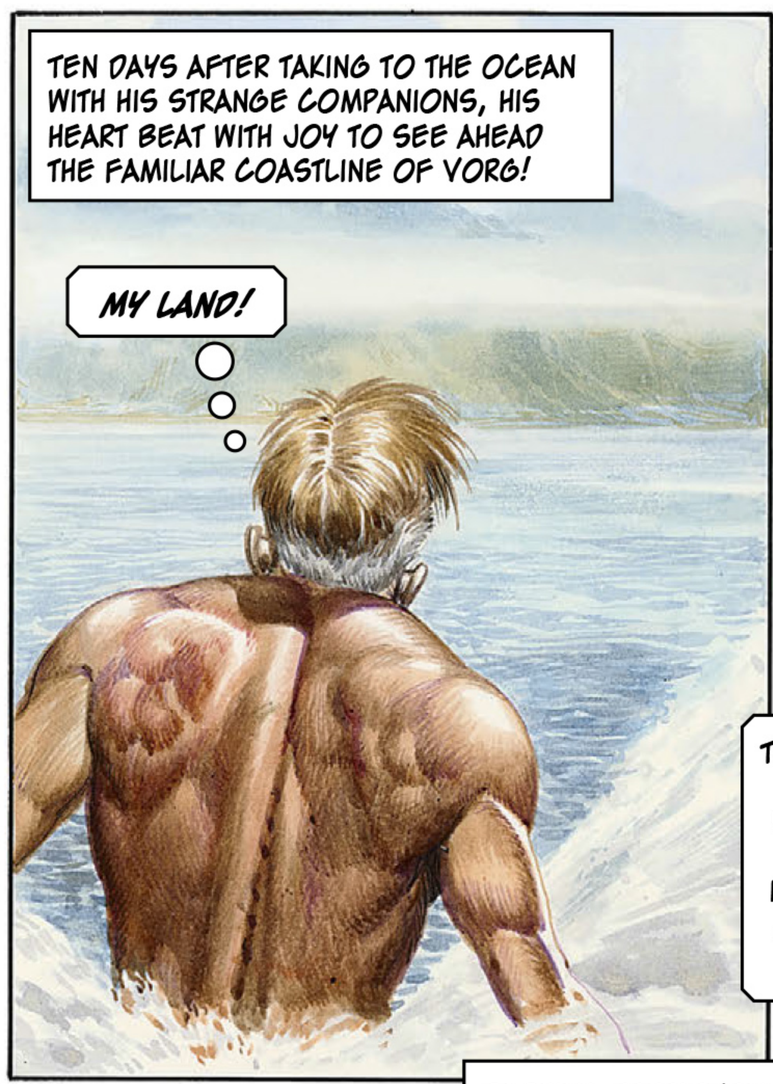

THAT NIGHT, TRIGO AND THE OLD MAN PARTED COMPANY FOREVER ON THE MOONLIT SHORE.
THANK YOU – AND FAREWELL!
REMEMBER... DO EXACTLY AS I TOLD YOU – AND GOOD FORTUNE GO WITH YOU!

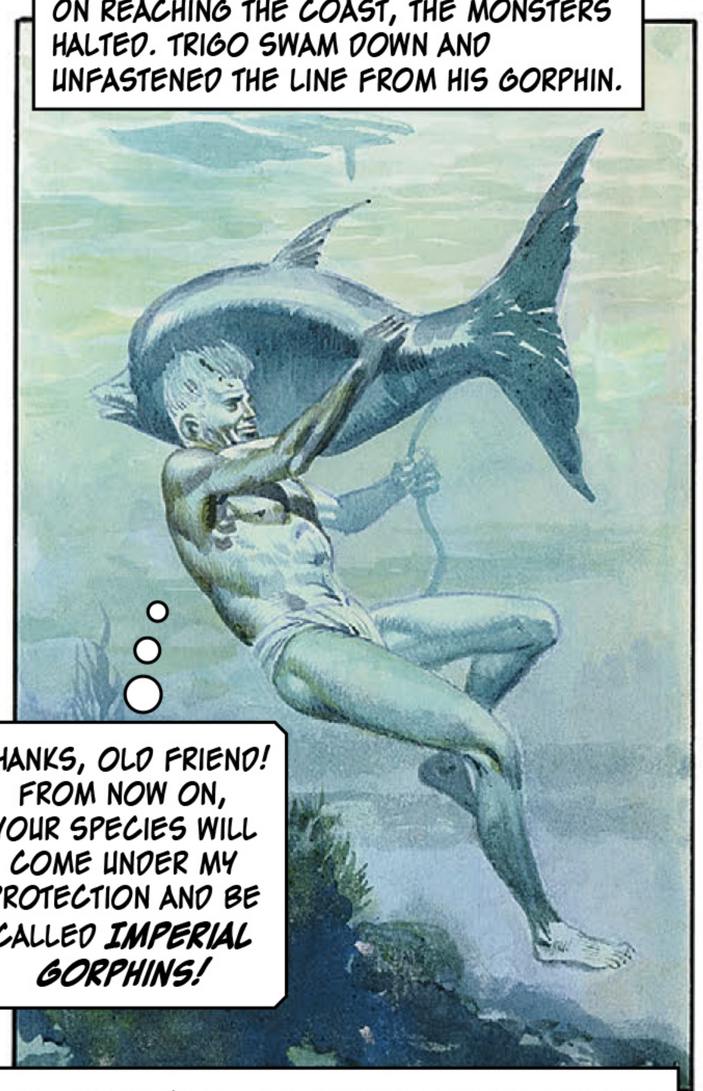

THE EMPEROR PADDLED OUT BEYOND THE BREAKERS TILL HE WAS ABOVE THE SLEEPING GORPHINS.
NOW...
HE SLIPPED SILENTLY BENEATH THE SURFACE...
...AND ATTACHED THE LOOP OF HIS LINE TO A MASSIVE TAIL.
DAWN FOUND HIM CROUCHED ON HIS RAFT, HIS HEART POUNDING.
IT IS NOW THE SOLSTICE OF ZORN – AND WHEN THE GORPHINS AWAKE...
THEN – SUDDENLY!
WE'RE MOVING!
INSTANTS LATER, HIS FRAIL RAFT WAS PLANING OVER THE WAVES AT BREATH-ROBBING SPEED!
WHEN THE FIRST TERROR HAD PASSED, A GREAT EXHILARATION SWEPT OVER TRIGAN'S EMPEROR.
TRIGAN CITY... HERE I COME!

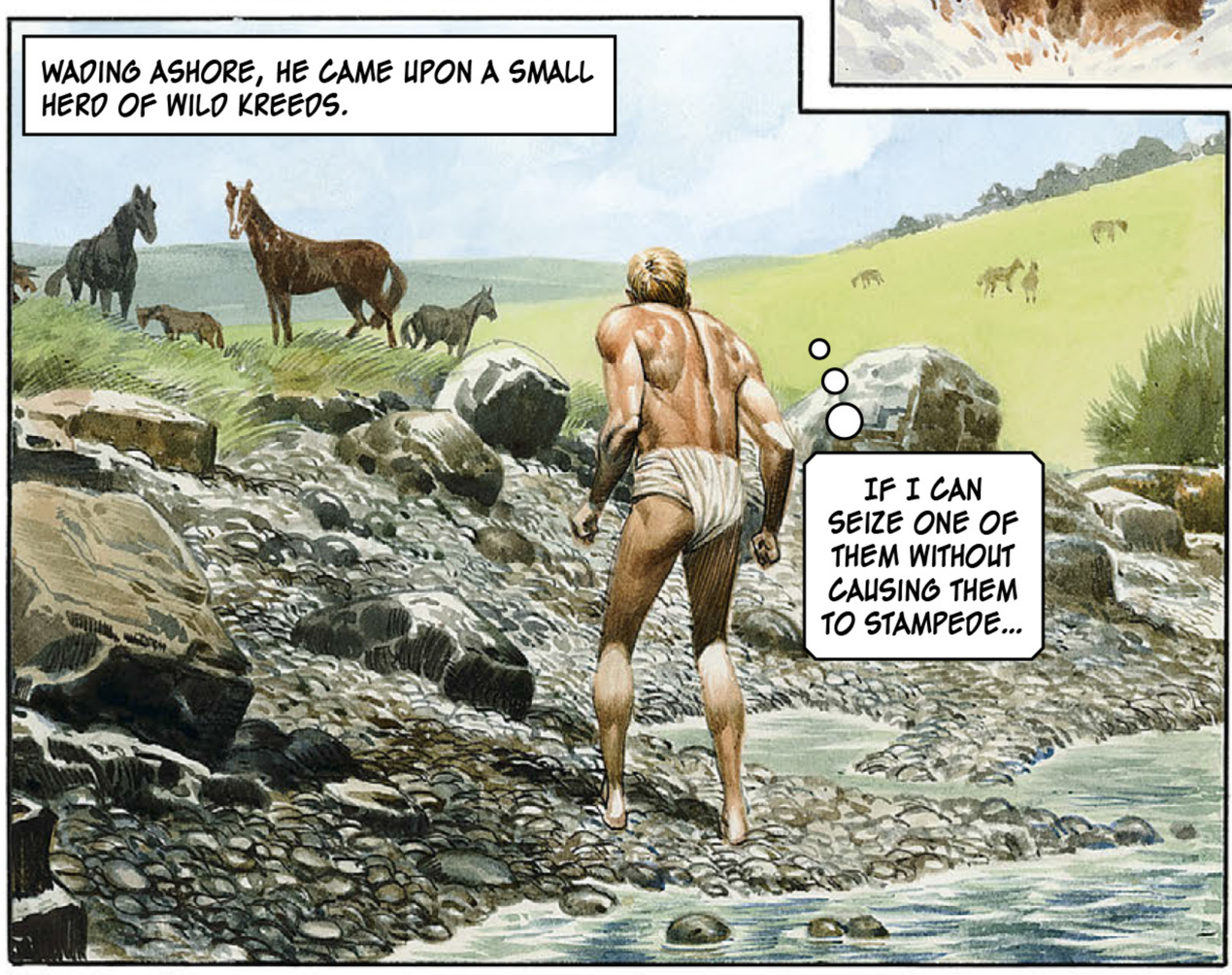

TO APPRECIATE THE FINAL, STUPENDOUS STAGE OF TRIGO'S EPIC JOURNEY, WE MUST SEE THE PLANET ELEKTON FROM THE UPPER STRATOSPHERE. (THE DOTTED RED LINE SHOWS THE ERRATIC COURSE OF THE GORPHINS ACROSS THE GREAT OCEAN TOWARDS THE COAST OF VORG.)

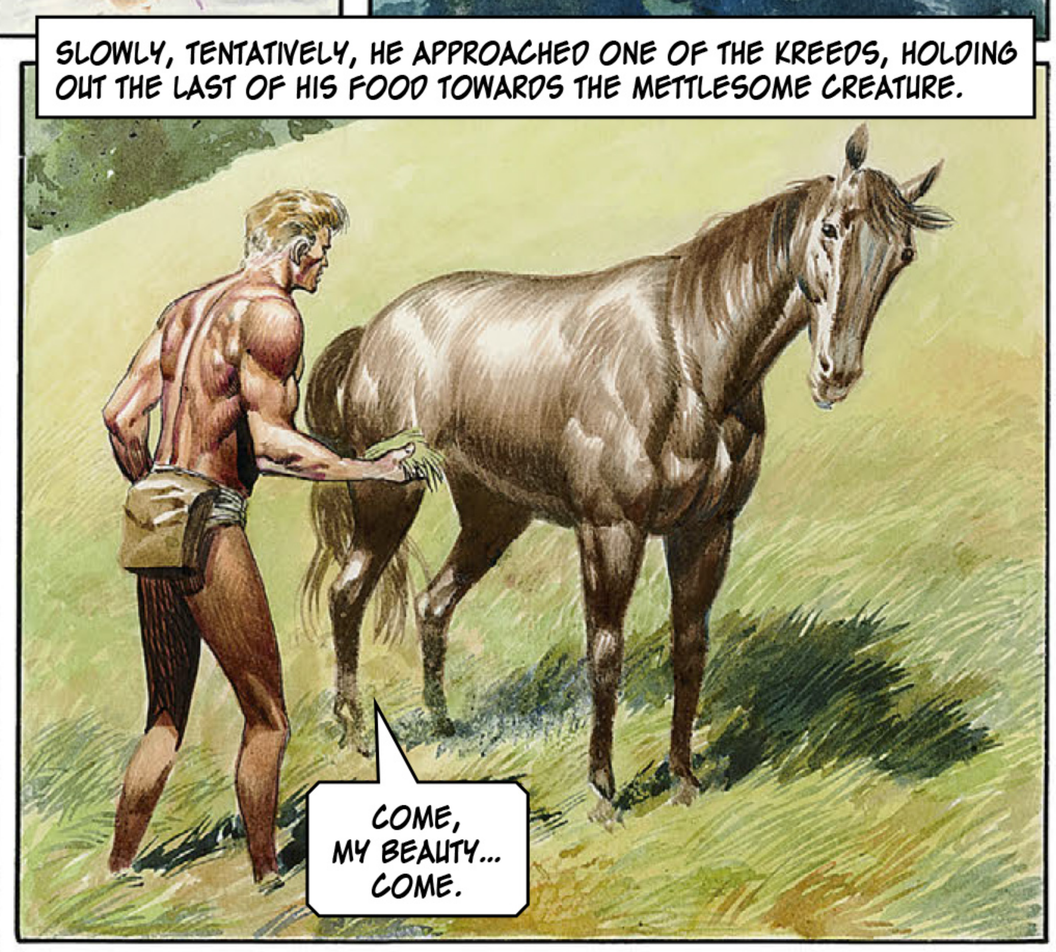

DURING THE HEAT OF THE DAY, THE GORPHINS HALTED FOR REST AND TO TAKE IN MASSES OF SMALL MARINE LIFE THROUGH THEIR OPEN MOUTHS. IT WAS THEN THAT TRIGO MADE A HASTY MEAL OF DRIED FOOD AND FRESH WATER.

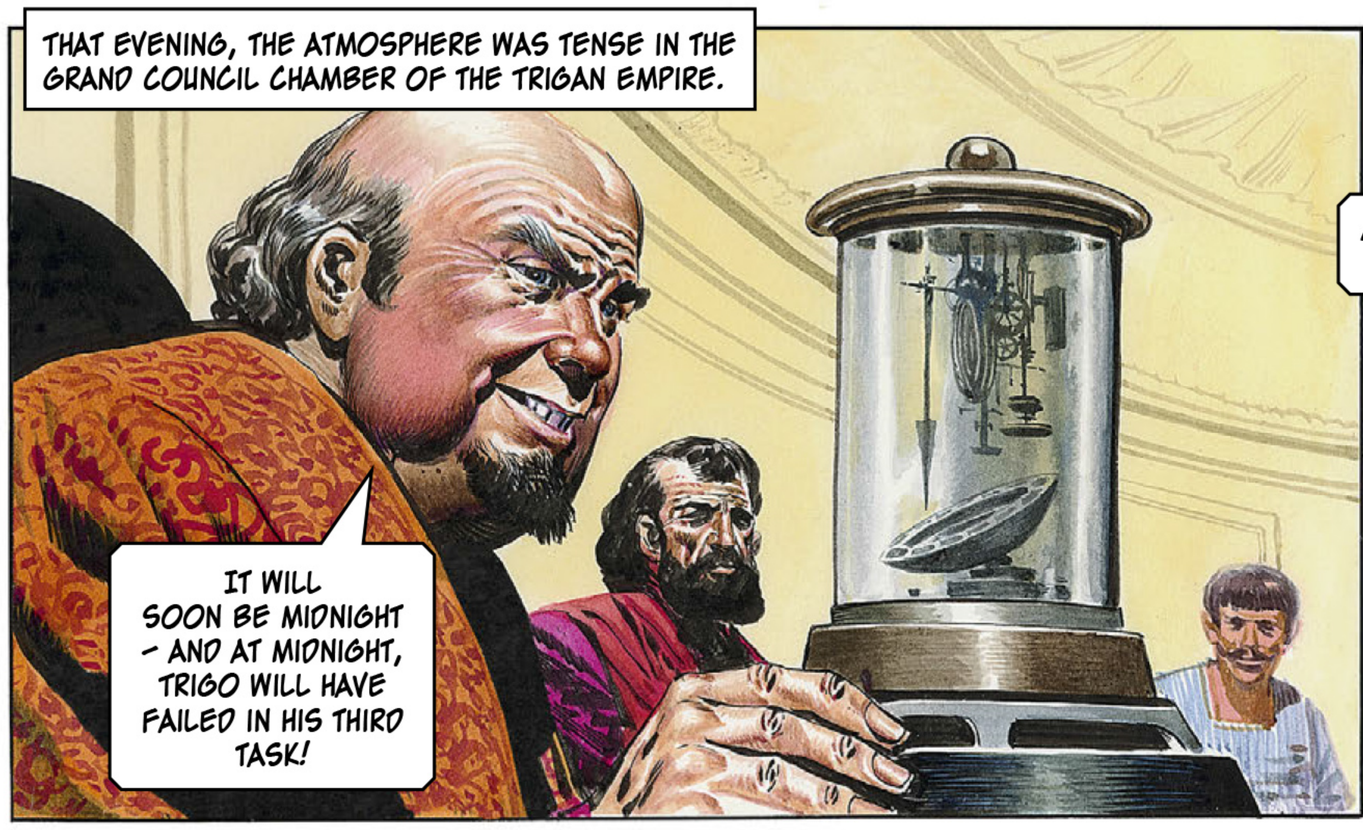
THE HEADLONG ONWARD RUSH WAS ALWAYS RECOMMENCED WITHOUT WARNING!
THERE GOES MY WATER!


TEN DAYS AFTER TAKING TO THE OCEAN WITH HIS STRANGE COMPANIONS, HIS HEART BEAT WITH JOY TO SEE AHEAD THE FAMILIAR COASTLINE OF VORG!
MY LAND!


ON REACHING THE COAST, THE MONSTERS HALTED. TRIGO SWAM DOWN AND UNFASTENED THE LINE FROM HIS GORPHIN.
THANKS, OLD FRIEND! FROM NOW ON, YOUR SPECIES WILL COME UNDER MY PROTECTION AND BE CALLED IMPERIAL GORPHINS!

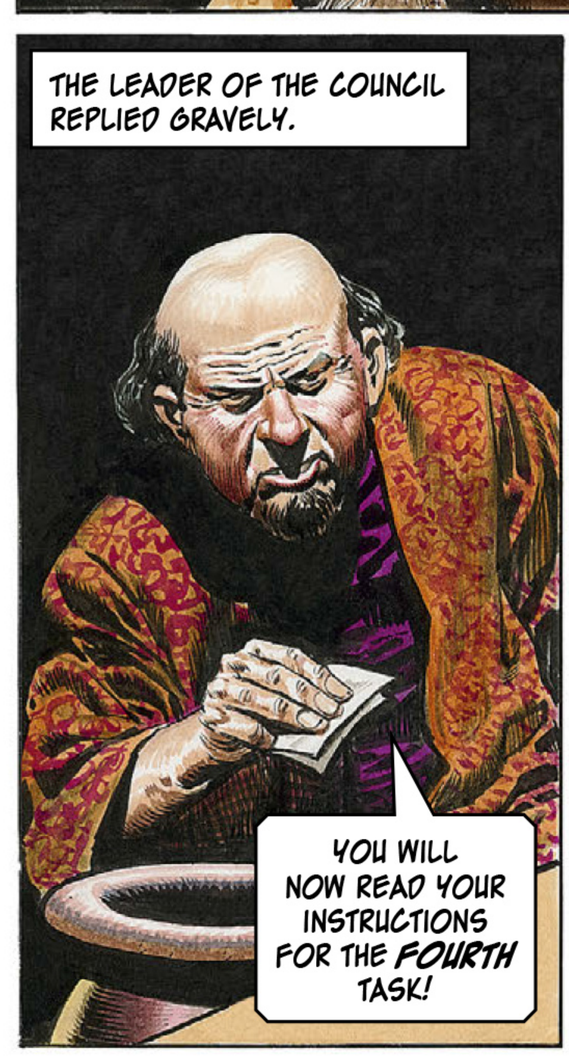

WADING ASHORE, HE CAME UPON A SMALL HERD OF WILD KREEDS.
IF I CAN SEIZE ONE OF THEM WITHOUT CAUSING THEM TO STAMPEDE...

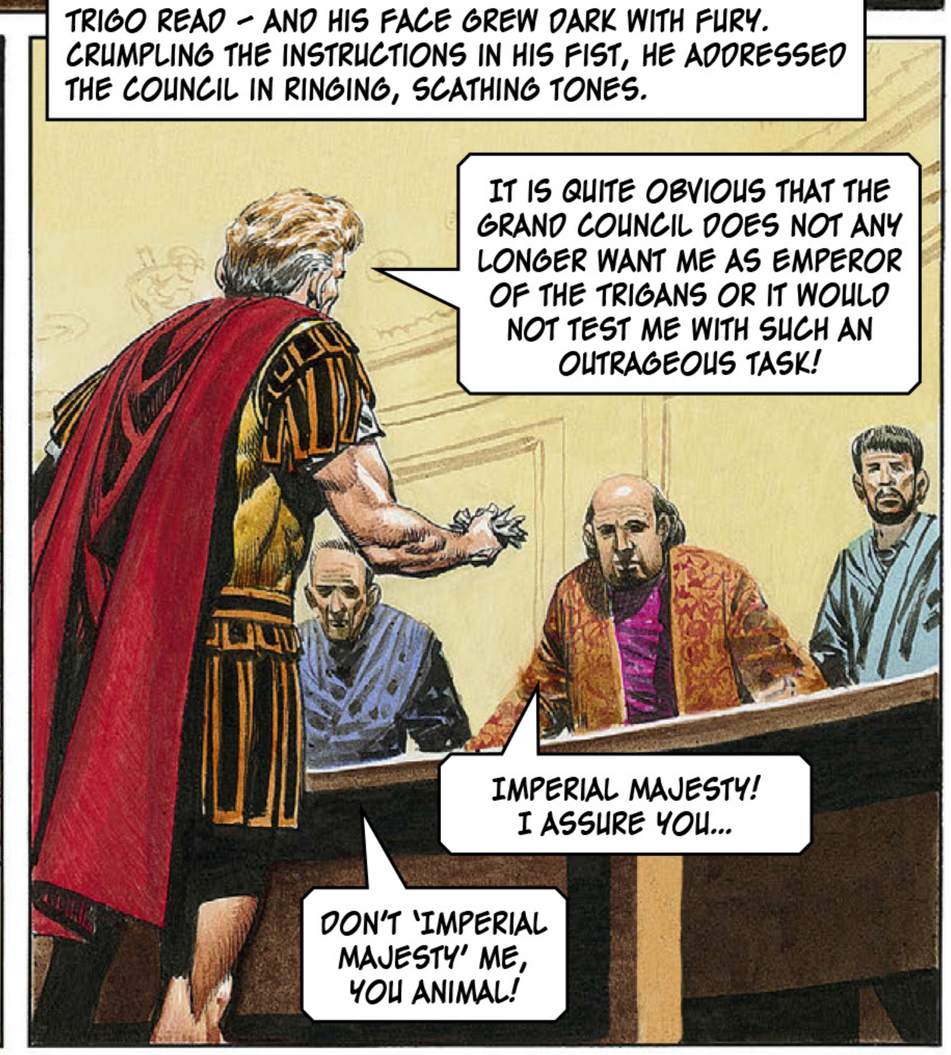

SLOWLY, TENTATIVELY, HE APPROACHED ONE OF THE KREEDS, HOLDING OUT THE LAST OF HIS FOOD TOWARDS THE METTLESOME CREATURE.
COME, MY BEAUTY... COME.

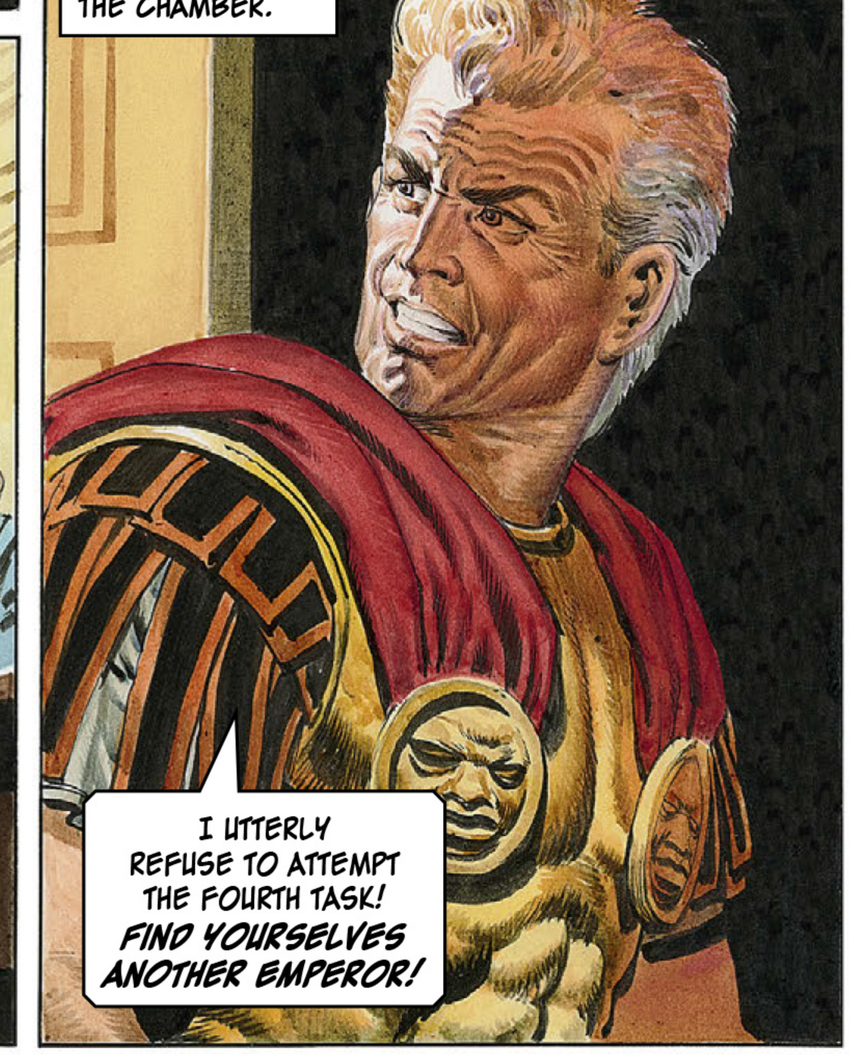

THAT EVENING, THE ATMOSPHERE WAS TENSE IN THE GRAND COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
IT WILL SOON BE MIDNIGHT – AND AT MIDNIGHT, TRIGO WILL HAVE FAILED IN HIS THIRD TASK!

THERE WERE SOME WHO WERE GLEEFUL.
AND A GOOD THING, TOO!
TRUE! TRIGO IS PAST HIS PRIME. IT'S HIGH TIME WE HAD A YOUNGER MAN FOR EMPEROR!

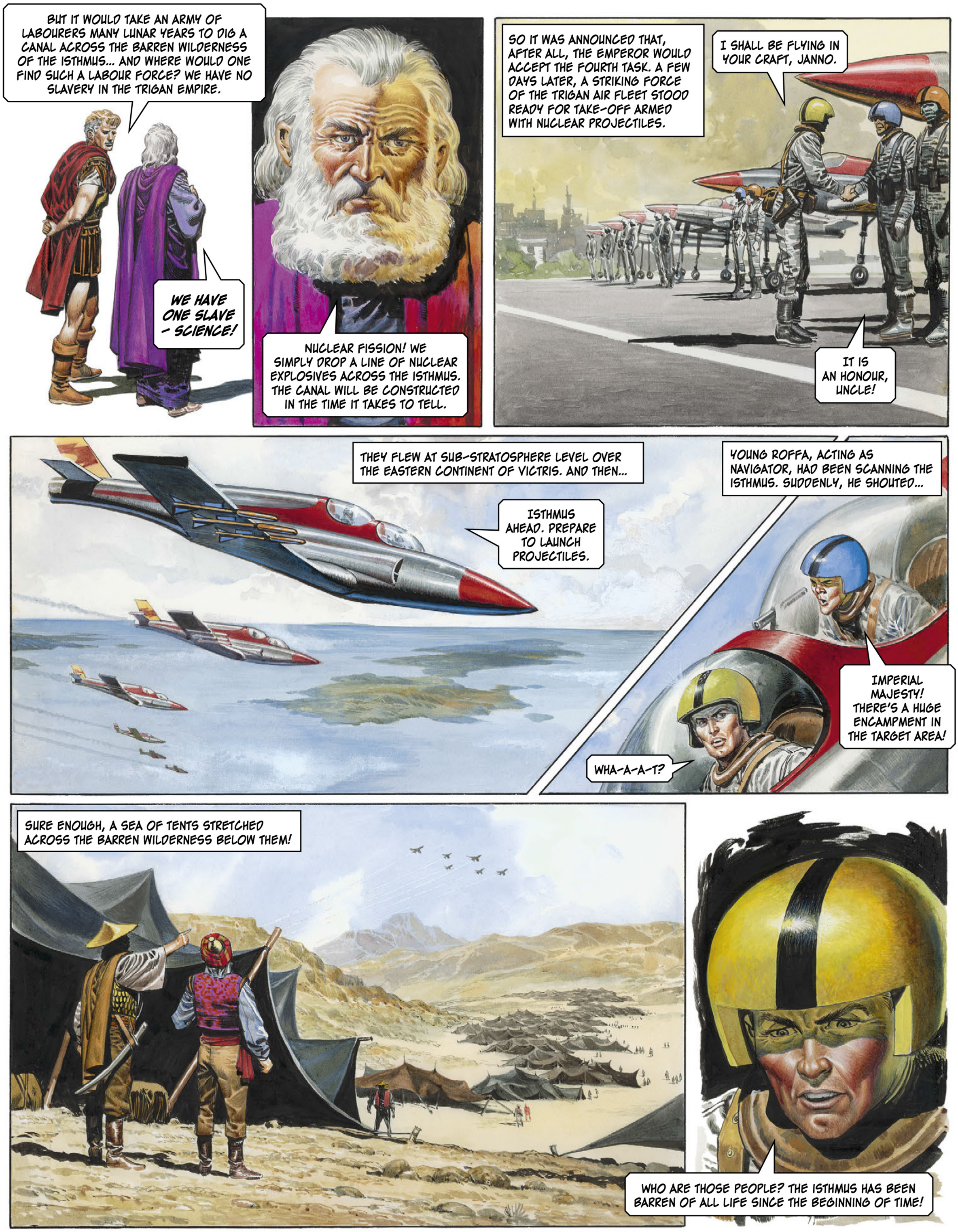
SHORTLY BEFORE MIDNIGHT, THERE WAS A PANDEMONIUM OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER. THE DOORS BURST OPEN... AND TRIGO RODE IN!
I HAVE ENCIRCLED THE PLANET!

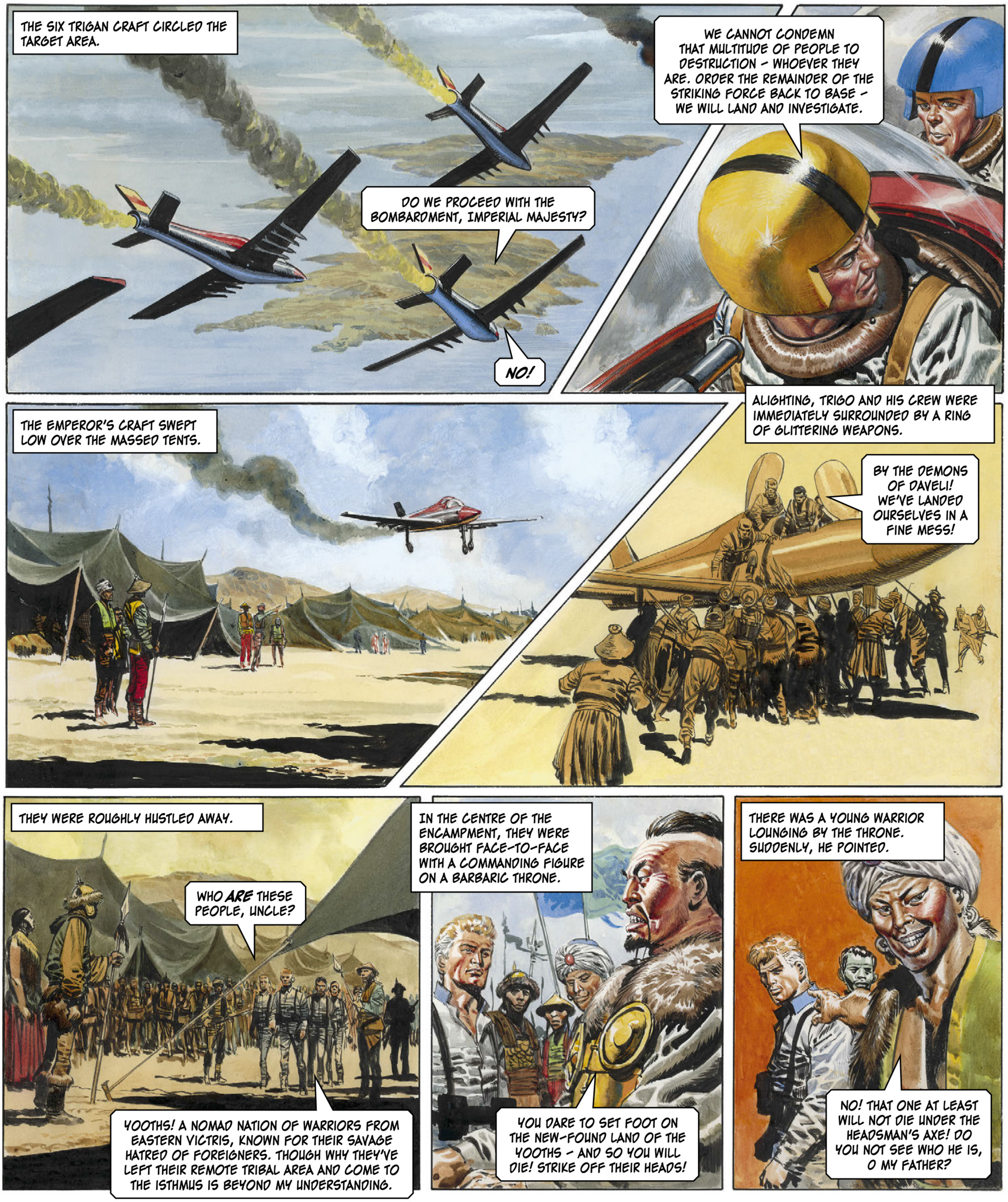

THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL REPLIED GRAVELY.
YOU WILL NOW READ YOUR INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FOURTH TASK!


TRIGO READ – AND HIS FACE GREW DARK WITH FURY. CRUMPLING THE INSTRUCTIONS IN HIS FIST, HE ADDRESSED THE COUNCIL IN RINGING, SCATHING TONES.
IT IS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT THE GRAND COUNCIL DOES NOT ANY LONGER WANT ME AS EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS OR IT WOULD NOT TEST ME WITH SUCH AN OUTRAGEOUS TASK!
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! I ASSURE YOU...
DON'T 'IMPERIAL MAJESTY' ME, YOU ANIMAL!


HE STRODE FROM THE CHAMBER.
I UTTERLY REFUSE TO ATTEMPT THE FOURTH TASK! FIND YOURSELVES ANOTHER EMPEROR!

TRIGO STORMED BACK TO HIS PRIVATE APARTMENTS IN THE IMPERIAL PALACE AND BEGAN AN ORGY OF DESTRUCTION!
TO DAVELI WITH THE ACCURSED TRIGAN EMPIRE. LET IT ROT AND ITS PEOPLE WITH IT!
THE DIN WAS TO BE HEARD AS FAR AS THE GREAT CITY SQUARE. WISE OLD PERIC, TRIGO'S GREATEST FRIEND, WENT TO THE IMPERIAL APARTMENTS.
LORD PERIC, I DARE NOT ADMIT YOU. HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY WOULD HAVE MY HEAD.
ADMIT ME, CAPTAIN. I WILL TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY.
AND SO...
WELL, OLD FRIEND, DO YOU FEEL BETTER AFTER THAT?
PERIC... I... THAT IS...
TRIGO'S FURY SUBSIDED. NOW THERE WAS ONLY BLACK BITTERNESS.
PERIC, I'M SICK TO DEATH OF THEM ALL. DIDN'T I FOUND THE EMPIRE WITH MY OWN MIND AND SINEWS? AND AFTER ALL THAT, THEY EXPECT ME TO PERFORM MIRACLES TO KEEP MY OWN THRONE!
TELL ME, TRIGO, WHAT IS THIS FOURTH TASK?
THE WORDS OF THE FOURTH TASK ARE THESE: "YOU WILL SWIM, WITHOUT STOPPING, FROM THE SEA OF TIBOR TO THE GULF OF JANSEN"! DO YOU SEE, PERIC? THE FOOLS EXPECT ME TO DO A NON-STOP SWIM ROUND THE CONTINENT OF VICTRIS!
PERIC REPLIED WITH A SMILE.
NOT AT ALL! WHAT THEY ARE ASKING YOU TO DO, GIVEN CERTAIN CONDITIONS, IS PERFECTLY SIMPLE FOR A MAN OF YOUR PHYSIQUE.
WHAT? HAVE YOU GONE MAD, PERIC?
THE OLD SCIENTIST EXPLAINED.
YOU MISJUDGED THE GRAND COUNCIL. WHAT THEY ARE REALLY ASKING YOU TO DO IS TO CONSTRUCT A CANAL ACROSS THE ISTHMUS FROM HERE TO HERE!
A CANAL? OF COURSE!


BUT IT WOULD TAKE AN ARMY OF LABOURERS MANY LUNAR YEARS TO DIG A CANAL ACROSS THE BARREN WILDERNESS OF THE ISTHMUS... AND WHERE WOULD ONE FIND SUCH A LABOUR FORCE? WE HAVE NO SLAVERY IN THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
WE HAVE ONE SLAVE – SCIENCE!
NUCLEAR FISSION! WE SIMPLY DROP A LINE OF NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES ACROSS THE ISTHMUS. THE CANAL WILL BE CONSTRUCTED IN THE TIME IT TAKES TO TELL.
SO IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT, AFTER ALL, THE EMPEROR WOULD ACCEPT THE FOURTH TASK. A FEW DAYS LATER, A STRIKING FORCE OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET STOOD READY FOR TAKE-OFF ARMED WITH NUCLEAR PROJECTILES.
I SHALL BE FLYING IN YOUR CRAFT, JANNO.
IT IS AN HONOUR, UNCLE!
THEY FLEW AT SUB-STRATOSPHERE LEVEL OVER THE EASTERN CONTINENT OF VICTRIS. AND THEN...
ISTHMUS AHEAD. PREPARE TO LAUNCH PROJECTILES.
YOUNG ROFFA, ACTING AS NAVIGATOR, HAD BEEN SCANNING THE ISTHMUS. SUDDENLY, HE SHOUTED...
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! THERE'S A HUGE ENCAMPMENT IN THE TARGET AREA!
WHA-A-A-T?
SURE ENOUGH, A SEA OF TENTS STRETCHED ACROSS THE BARREN WILDERNESS BELOW THEM!
WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE? THE ISTHMUS HAS BEEN BARREN OF ALL LIFE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME!


THE SIX TRIGAN CRAFT CIRCLED THE TARGET AREA.
DO WE PROCEED WITH THE BOMBARDMENT, IMPERIAL MAJESTY?
NO!
WE CANNOT CONDEMN THAT MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE TO DESTRUCTION – WHOEVER THEY ARE. ORDER THE REMAINDER OF THE STRIKING FORCE BACK TO BASE – WE WILL LAND AND INVESTIGATE.
THE EMPEROR'S CRAFT SWEPT LOW OVER THE MASSED TENTS.
ALIGHTING, TRIGO AND HIS CREW WERE IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDED BY A RING OF GLITTERING WEAPONS.
BY THE DEMONS OF DAVELI! WE'VE LANDED OURSELVES IN A FINE MESS!
THEY WERE ROUGHLY HUSTLED AWAY.
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE, UNCLE?
YOOTHS! A NOMAD NATION OF WARRIORS FROM EASTERN VICTRIS, KNOWN FOR THEIR SAVAGE HATRED OF FOREIGNERS. THOUGH WHY THEY'VE LEFT THEIR REMOTE TRIBAL AREA AND COME TO THE ISTHMUS IS BEYOND MY UNDERSTANDING.
IN THE CENTRE OF THE ENCAMPMENT, THEY WERE BROUGHT FACE-TO-FACE WITH A COMMANDING FIGURE ON A BARBARIC THRONE.
YOU DARE TO SET FOOT ON THE NEW-FOUND LAND OF THE YOOTHS – AND SO YOU WILL DIE! STRIKE OFF THEIR HEADS!
THERE WAS A YOUNG WARRIOR LOUNGING BY THE THRONE. SUDDENLY, HE POINTED.
NO! THAT ONE AT LEAST WILL NOT DIE UNDER THE HEADSMAN'S AXE! DO YOU NOT SEE WHO HE IS, O MY FATHER?

A TRIGAN COIN LAY IN THE PALM OF THE YOUNG WARRIOR'S HAND.

THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS!

MURMURS OF AMAZEMENT WERE SILENCED BY THE HARSH VOICE OF THE YOOTH CHIEF.

LET MY SON SPEAK! WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS TOWARDS THE PRISONER, O MY SON?

THE MIGHTY EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS SHALL PERISH AT MY HAND – *IN SINGLE COMBAT!*

A SWORD WAS BUCKLED ABOUT TRIGO AND A SHIELD AND LANCE THRUST INTO HIS HANDS.

WHAT'S HIS GAME?

THE YOUNG FIRE-EATER IS OUT TO WIN HIMSELF THE GLORY OF HAVING KILLED AN EMPEROR IN SINGLE COMBAT. I MUST SEE TO IT THAT HE SUFFERS A PAINFUL DISAPPOINTMENT!

KREEDS WERE BROUGHT – AND THE TWO CONTESTANTS MOUNTED AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF AN OPEN STRETCH OF GROUND.

WATCH HIM, UNCLE! HE LOOKS A SAVAGE BRUTE WITH PLENTY OF POWER IN HIS ARMS. AND HE'S YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE...

YOUNG HE MAY BE – BUT I AM NOT YET IN MY DOTAGE, NEPHEW!

A THUNDEROUS CHARGE – LANCE POINT TO LANCE POINT!

A SHATTERING IMPACT – SPLINTERED LANCES!

TRIGO'S MOUNT STUMBLED IN MID-STRIDE AND FELL. TRIGO ROLLED OVER AND SNATCHED AT THE HILT OF HIS SWORD – AS HIS OPPONENT CAME AT HIM, WAR-CLUB SWINGING!

LOOK YOUR LAST UPON THE SKY, MIGHTY EMPEROR!

THE YOOTH WARRIOR SWUNG LOW FROM HIS SADDLE AND BROUGHT THE WAR-CLUB SMASHING DOWN.
YAAAA-AAA!

BUT THE WEAPON STRUCK ONLY THE ROCKY GROUND AND TRIGO'S STRONG HAND CLOSED ABOUT THE SHAFT.

AAAAAGH!
...TRIGO WAS ASTRIDE HIS OPPONENT'S KREED AND THE YOOTH WARRIOR WAS SENT CRASHING TO THE GROUND!
UUUUUUUH!

HE FELL IN AN UNCONSCIOUS HEAP AT THE FEET OF HIS FATHER, THE CHIEF.
AND NOW – TAKE YOUR PEOPLE AND DEPART FROM THIS ISTHMUS OF VICTRIS BEFORE DESTRUCTION RAINS DOWN FROM THE SKY AND YOUR WHOLE NATION IS WIPED OUT IN ONE MASSIVE FIREBALL!

FURIOUSLY, THE CHIEF TURNED TO A WEIRDLY-GARBED FIGURE THAT EMERGED FROM THE CROWD.
YOU! THE ALL-WISE SOOTHSAYER OF THE YOOTHS! WHERE IS YOUR PROPHECY NOW? BECAUSE OF YOUR SO-CALLED VISION, WE LEFT OUR LANDS IN THE EAST TO COME HERE – AND NOW THE TRIGAN EMPEROR SPEAKS OF DESTRUCTION FROM THE SKY!

THE SOOTHSAYER REPLIED – AND IN HIS MIND'S OWN EYE, TRIGO SAW THE VISION OF WHICH THE OLD MAN SPOKE...

THERE WILL BE NO DESTRUCTION! IT WILL BE AS I PROPHESIED – A GREAT WATERWAY WILL SPAN THE ISTHMUS, BRINGING THE RICHES OF ALL ELEKTON TO THIS PLACE. MASSIVE CITIES WILL ARISE HERE AND THE YOOTHS WILL DWELL HERE IN PEACE AND GREATNESS!

TRIGO BROKE THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED THE SOOTHSAYER'S WORDS.

HE IS RIGHT! IT WAS MY PLAN TO ***BLAST*** A CANAL ACROSS THE ISTHMUS – BUT THERE IS ANOTHER WAY OF DOING IT! A WAY THAT WILL MAKE THE PROPHECY A REALITY!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

LET THE MASSED NATION OF YOOTHS CARVE OUT THE CANAL WITH THEIR SWEAT AND SINEWS – AND THEY CAN REMAIN HERE FOREVER UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

THERE WAS A LONG PAUSE – AND THEN...

IT SHALL BE DONE!

THAT VERY HOUR, BEFORE THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON HAD RISEN TO THE ZENITH, A BEGINNING WAS MADE TO THE GREAT CANAL. BY TWILIGHT, THE TOILING MULTITUDE HAD SCORED A WIDE FURROW IN THE ROCKY EARTH.

TRIGO WATCHED FROM A HILLCREST.

WHEN IT IS FINISHED, I SHALL SWIM FROM THE SEA OF TIBOR TO THE GULF OF JANSEN – SO COMPLETING MY FOURTH TASK!

AND HE HIMSELF WAS WATCHED BY THE HATE-FILLED EYES OF THE CHIEF'S SON.

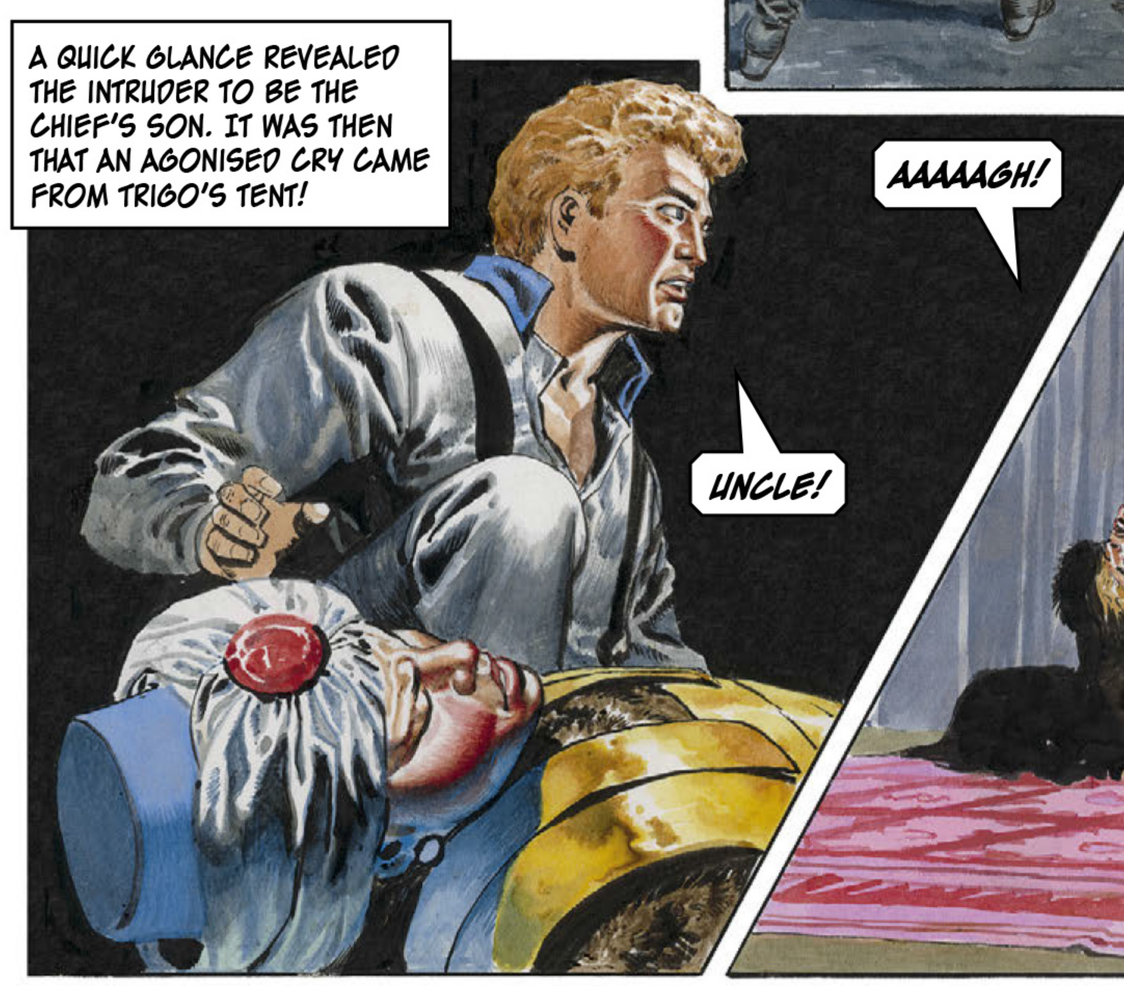
YOU WILL NEVER SEE IT FINISHED, MIGHTY EMPEROR! ***YOU WILL NOT LIVE TO SEE THE DAWN!***

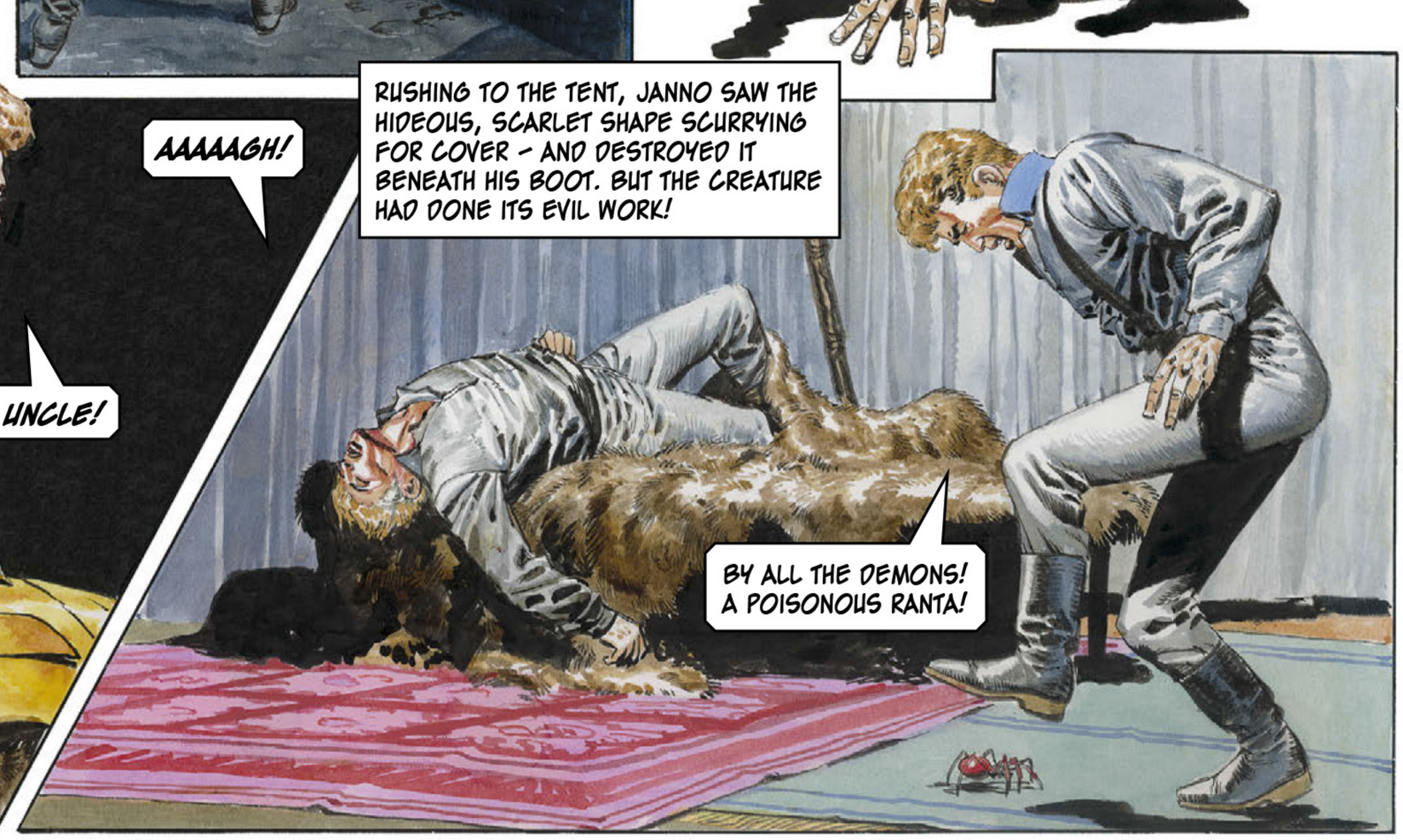
IN THE DARK HOURS OF THE NIGHT, BY THE GLARE OF COUNTLESS TORCHES, THE MULTITUDE OF YOOTHS TOILED TO DIG THE GREAT CANAL.

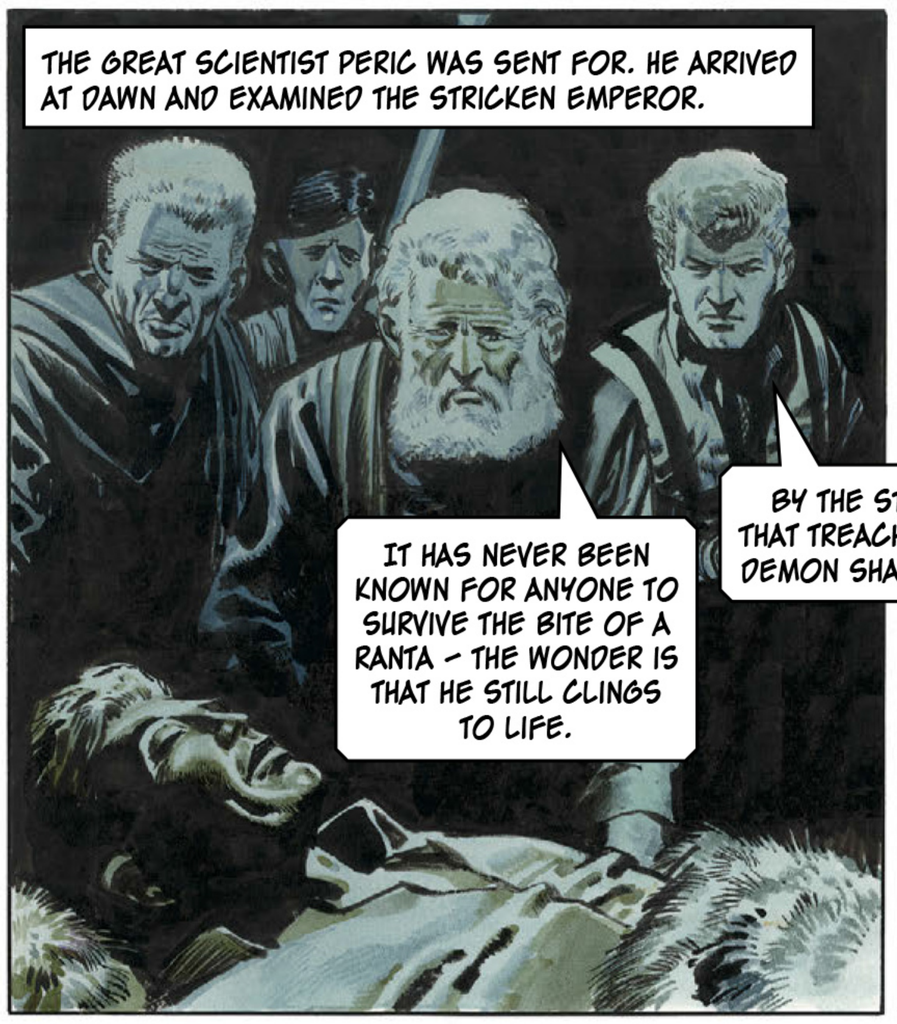
JUST BEFORE DAWN, TRIGO WENT TO SNATCH A FEW HOURS SLEEP. WHILE HE SLEPT, AN INTRUDER CAME...

YOUNG JANNO, WHO HAD BEEN KEEPING SENTRY-GO ON HIS UNCLE'S TENT, SAW THE INTRUDER CREEPING AWAY.
WHO GOES THERE? HALT!

A SWIFT PURSUIT – A SHATTERING BLOW – AND THE QUARRY CRASHED HEADLONG TO THE GROUND.
UUUUUH...

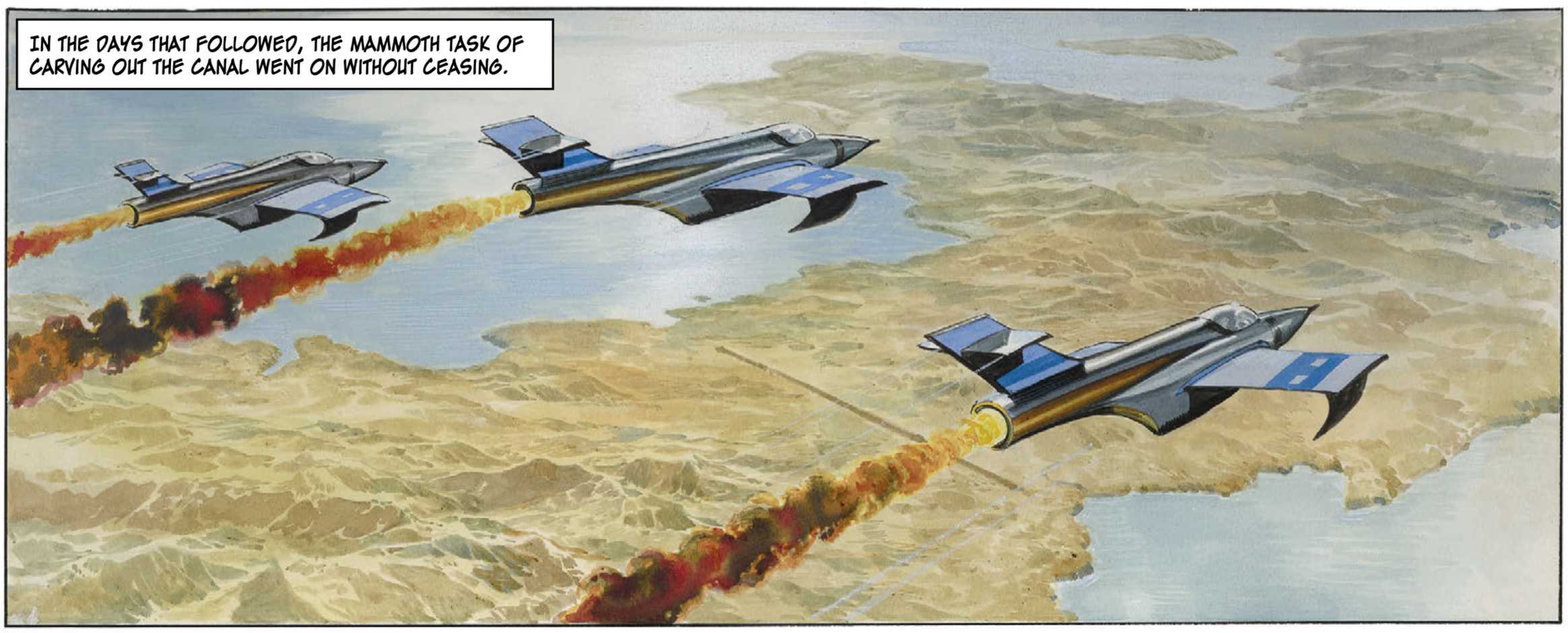

A QUICK GLANCE REVEALED THE INTRUDER TO BE THE CHIEF'S SON. IT WAS THEN THAT AN AGONISED CRY CAME FROM TRIGO'S TENT!
AAAAAGH!
UNCLE!


RUSHING TO THE TENT, JANNO SAW THE HIDEOUS, SCARLET SHAPE SCURRYING FOR COVER – AND DESTROYED IT BENEATH HIS BOOT. BUT THE CREATURE HAD DONE ITS EVIL WORK!
BY ALL THE DEMONS! A POISONOUS RANTA!

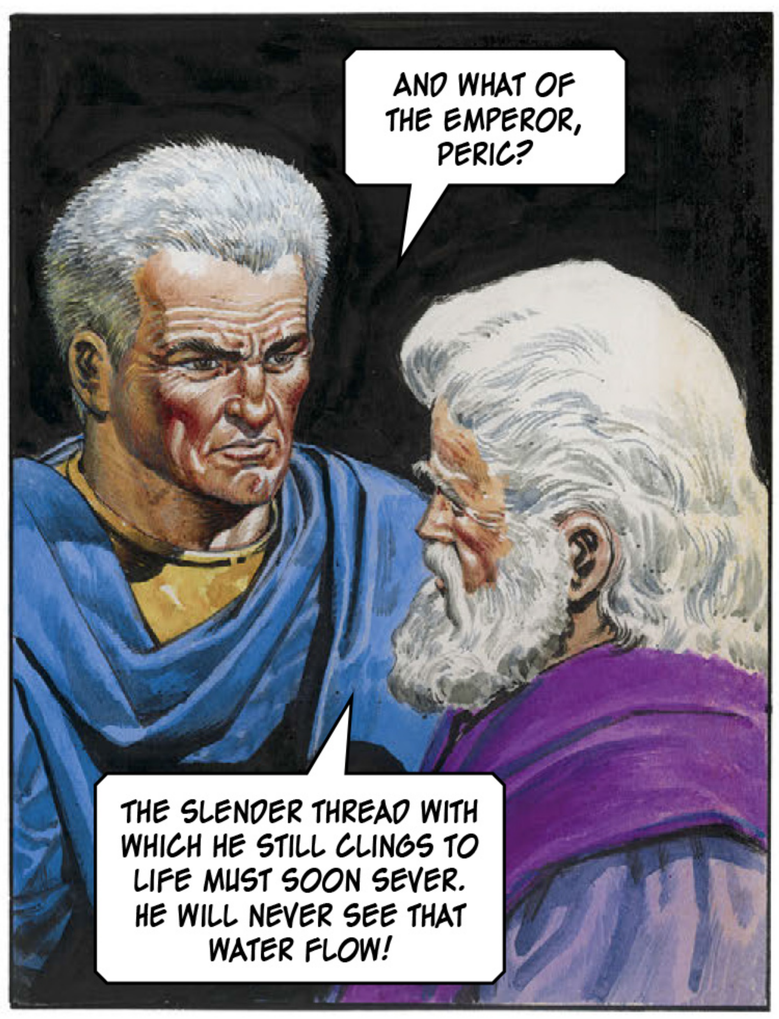

THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC WAS SENT FOR. HE ARRIVED AT DAWN AND EXAMINED THE STRICKEN EMPEROR.
IT HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN FOR ANYONE TO SURVIVE THE BITE OF A RANTA – THE WONDER IS THAT HE STILL CLINGS TO LIFE.
BY THE STARS! THAT TREACHEROUS DEMON SHALL DIE!

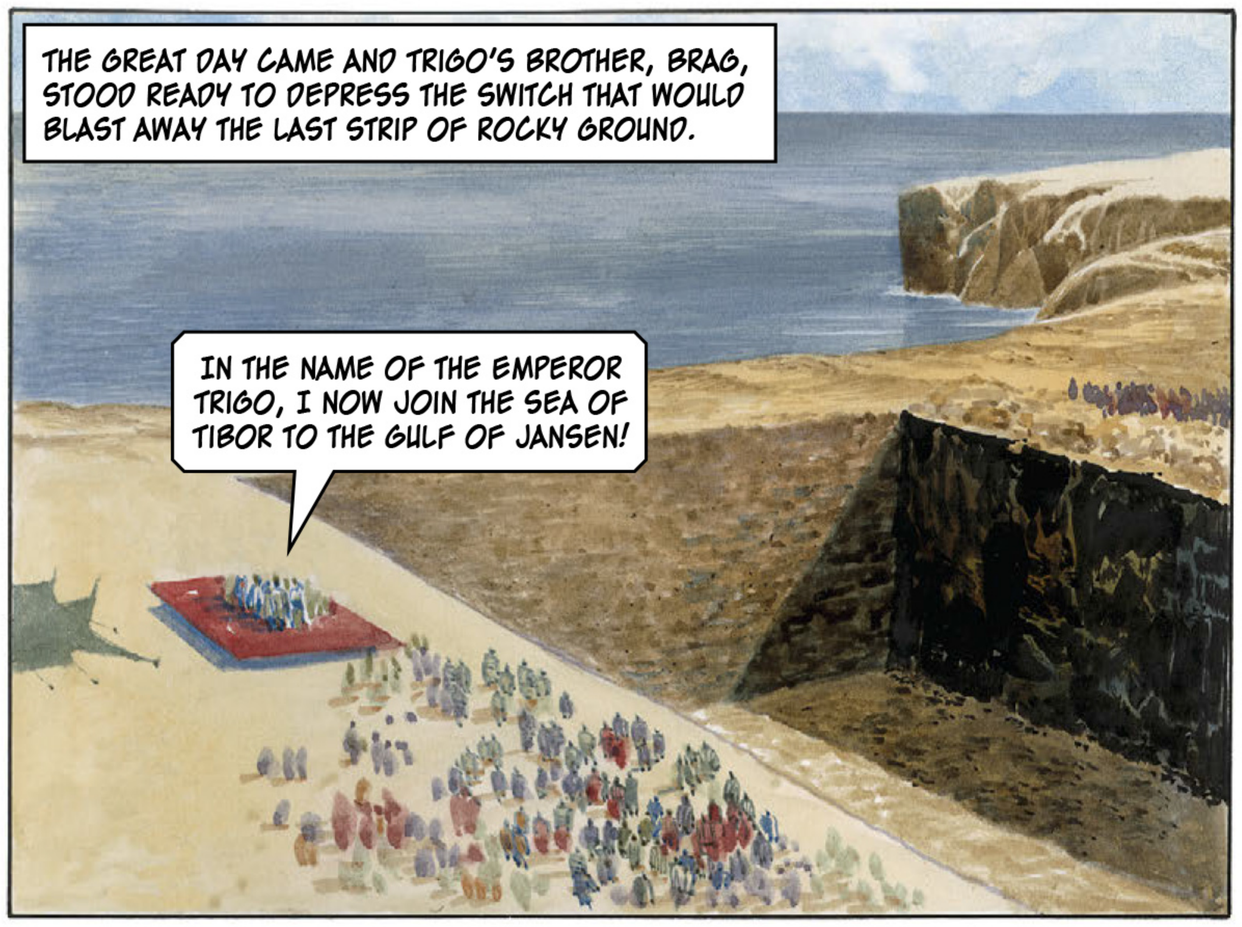
HOT-HEADED JANNO WENT STRAIGHT TO AVENGE HIS UNCLE. BUT THE ASSASSIN'S OWN FATHER STAYED HIS HAND.
UNBIND HIM AND I WILL FIGHT HIM TO THE DEATH!
I SAY NO!

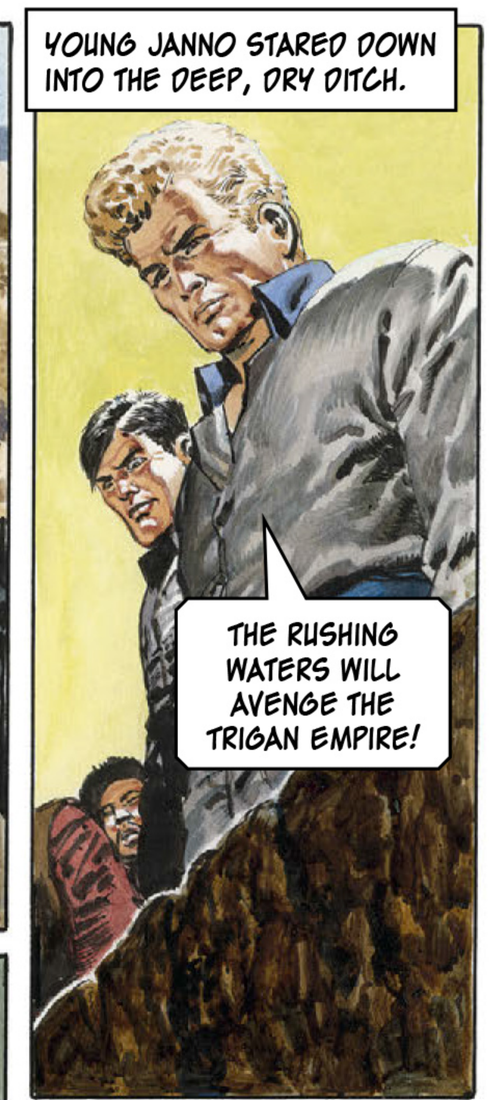
HE HAS BROUGHT DISHONOUR UPON MY PEOPLE AND HE IS NO LONGER MY SON! HE SHALL DIE IN A MANNER AND AT A TIME DECIDED BY ME ALONE!


IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, THE MAMMOTH TASK OF CARVING OUT THE CANAL WENT ON WITHOUT CEASING.

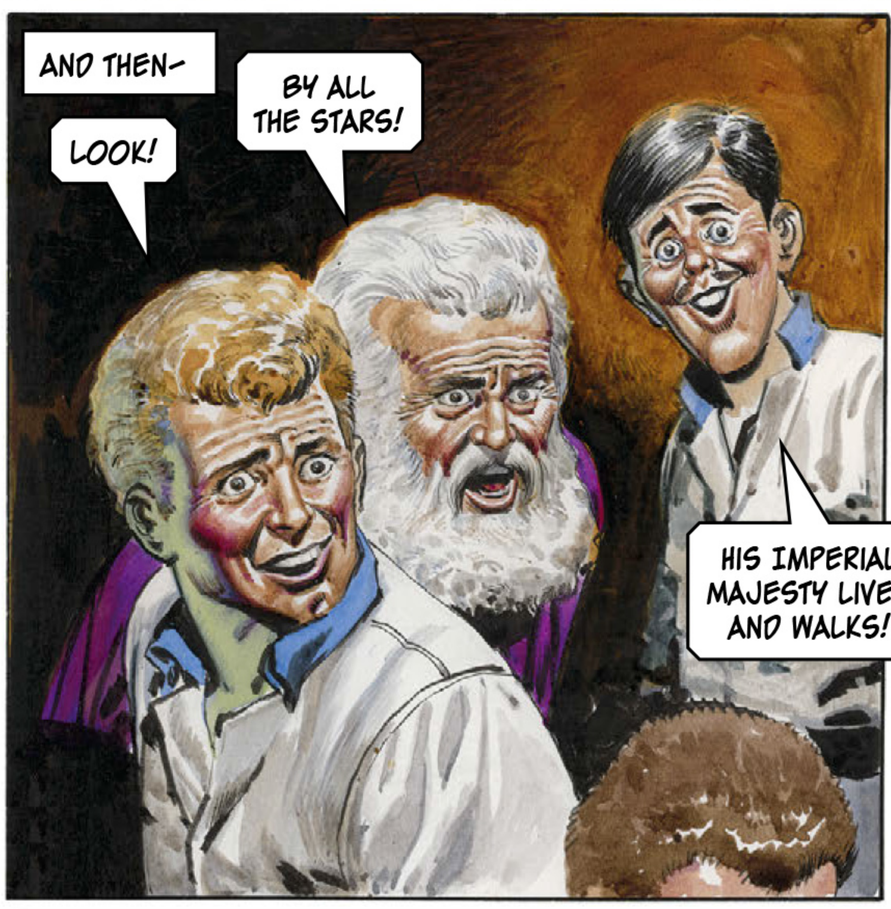
SOON, ONLY A NARROW STRIP OF ROCKY GROUND REMAINED.
THE EMPEROR'S WISH IS ABOUT TO BECOME REALITY – A SINGLE BLAST OF EXPLOSIVE WILL JOIN THE SEA OF TIBOR TO THE GULF OF JANSEN!

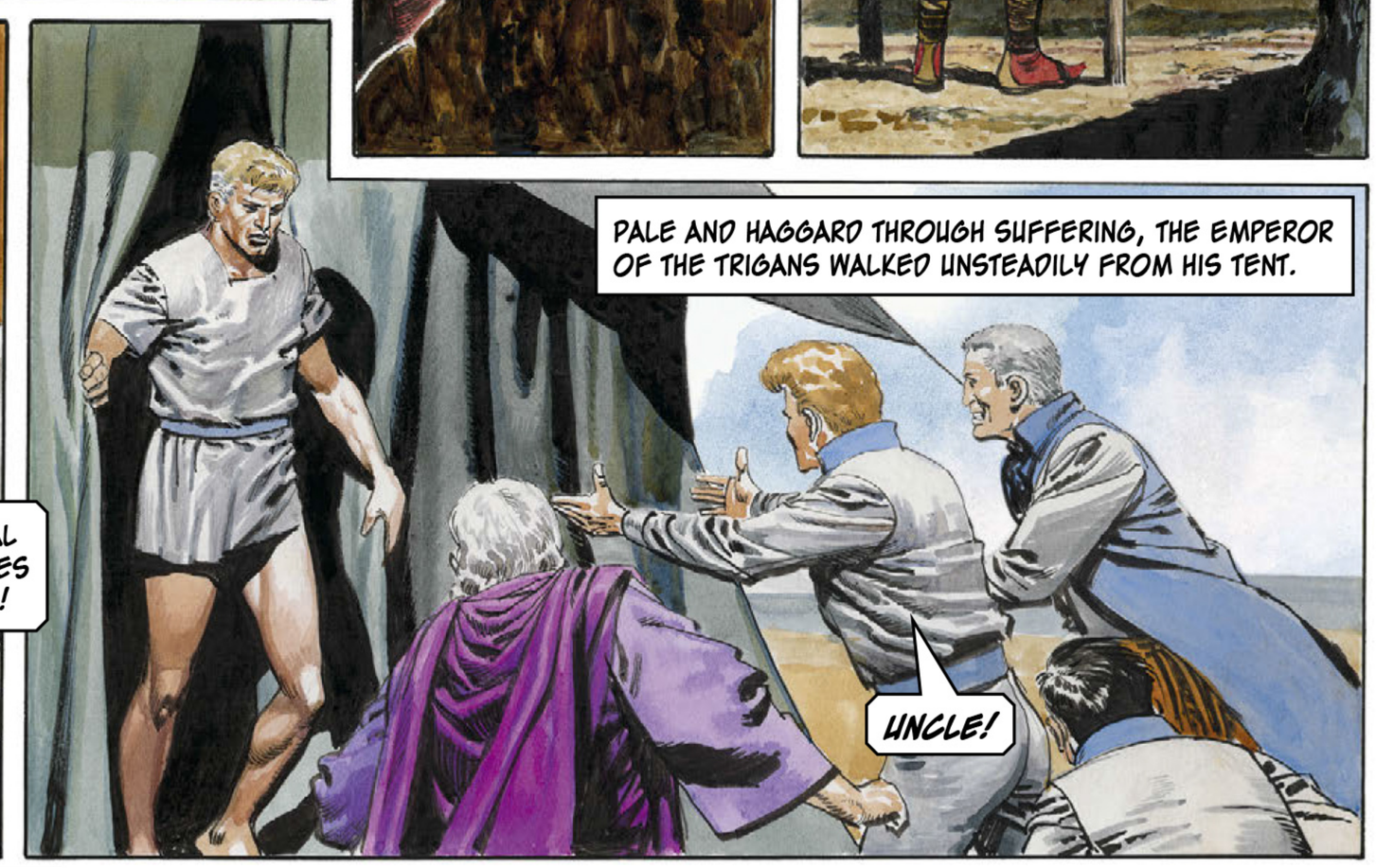

AND WHAT OF THE EMPEROR, PERIC?
THE SLENDER THREAD WITH WHICH HE STILL CLINGS TO LIFE MUST SOON SEVER. HE WILL NEVER SEE THAT WATER FLOW!


THE GREAT DAY CAME AND TRIGO'S BROTHER, BRAG, STOOD READY TO DEPRESS THE SWITCH THAT WOULD BLAST AWAY THE LAST STRIP OF ROCKY GROUND.
IN THE NAME OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO, I NOW JOIN THE SEA OF TIBOR TO THE GULF OF JANSEN!


YOUNG JANNO STARED DOWN INTO THE DEEP, DRY DITCH.
THE RUSHING WATERS WILL AVENGE THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

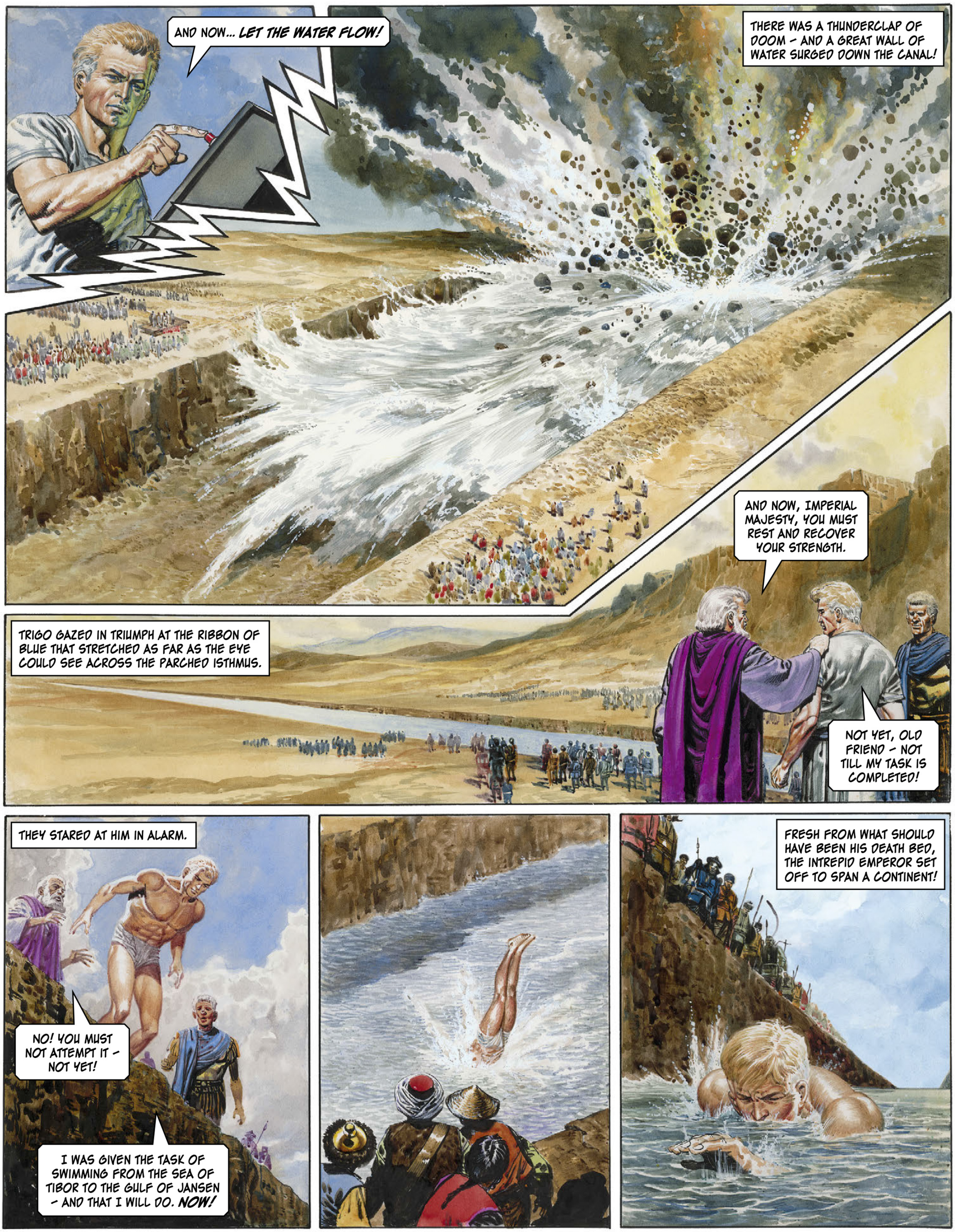
STAKED IN THE PATH OF THE COMING DELUGE, BY THE ORDER OF HIS FATHER, WAS THE YOOTH WARRIOR WHO HAD TREACHEROUSLY BROUGHT TRIGO TO HIS DOOM.
NO! NO! MERCY- MERCY!


AND THEN-
LOOK!
BY ALL THE STARS!
HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY LIVES AND WALKS!


PALE AND HAGGARD THROUGH SUFFERING, THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS WALKED UNSTEADILY FROM HIS TENT.
UNCLE!

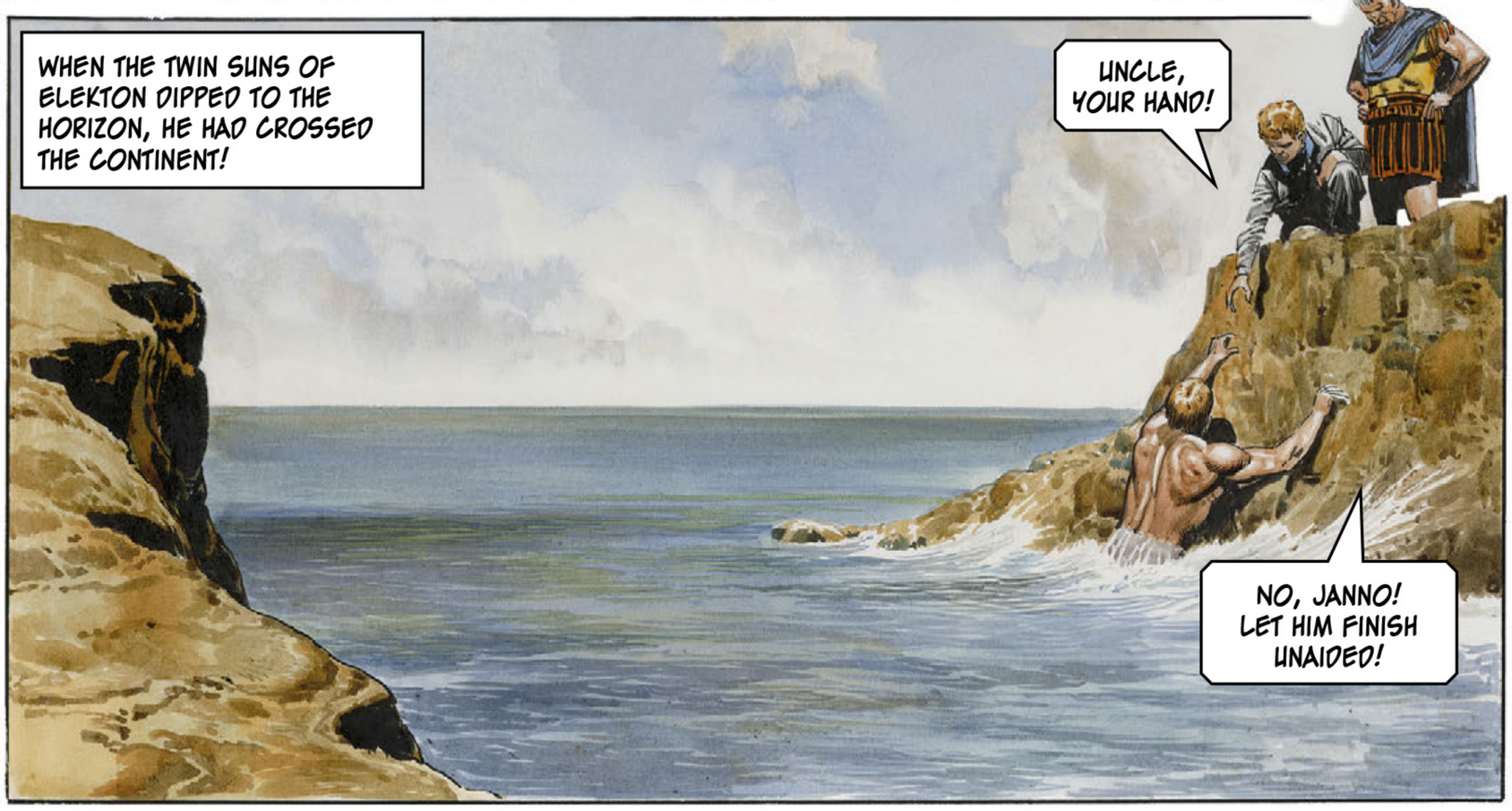
TRIGO'S VOICE BROKE HOARSELY THROUGH THEIR EXCITED CRIES.
BROTHER! THIS IS LIKE A MIRACLE...
YOU ARE RESTORED TO US!
FREE THAT MAN!

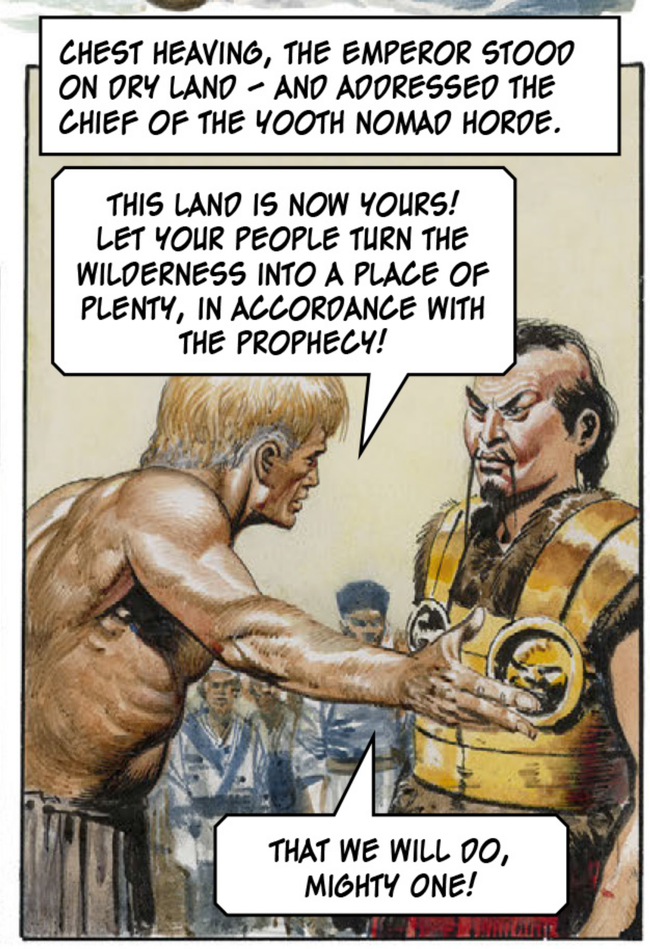
THE TRAITOR WAS RELEASED. HE FELL AT THE EMPEROR'S FEET.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY... I SHALL NEVER FORGET YOUR MERCY!


AND NOW... LET THE WATER FLOW!
THERE WAS A THUNDERCLAP OF DOOM – AND A GREAT WALL OF WATER SURGED DOWN THE CANAL!
AND NOW, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, YOU MUST REST AND RECOVER YOUR STRENGTH.
TRIGO GAZED IN TRIUMPH AT THE RIBBON OF BLUE THAT STRETCHED AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE ACROSS THE PARCHED ISTHMUS.
NOT YET, OLD FRIEND – NOT TILL MY TASK IS COMPLETED!
THEY STARED AT HIM IN ALARM.
NO! YOU MUST NOT ATTEMPT IT – NOT YET!
I WAS GIVEN THE TASK OF SWIMMING FROM THE SEA OF TIBOR TO THE GULF OF JANSEN – AND THAT I WILL DO. NOW!
FRESH FROM WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN HIS DEATH BED, THE INTREPID EMPEROR SET OFF TO SPAN A CONTINENT!

ALL THROUGH THE HEAT OF THAT LONG DAY, THE MULTITUDES FOLLOWED THE SWIMMING FIGURE DOWN THE VAST STRETCH OF CANAL. THERE WERE MOMENTS OF ALARM...
HE SINKS!
NO! HE'S COME UP AGAIN!
THE EMPEROR MUST SURELY DROWN!

COUNTLESS TIMES, TRIGO FALTERED IN HIS STROKE AND SANK THROUGH SHEER FATIGUE – BUT ALWAYS TO RE-EMERGE.

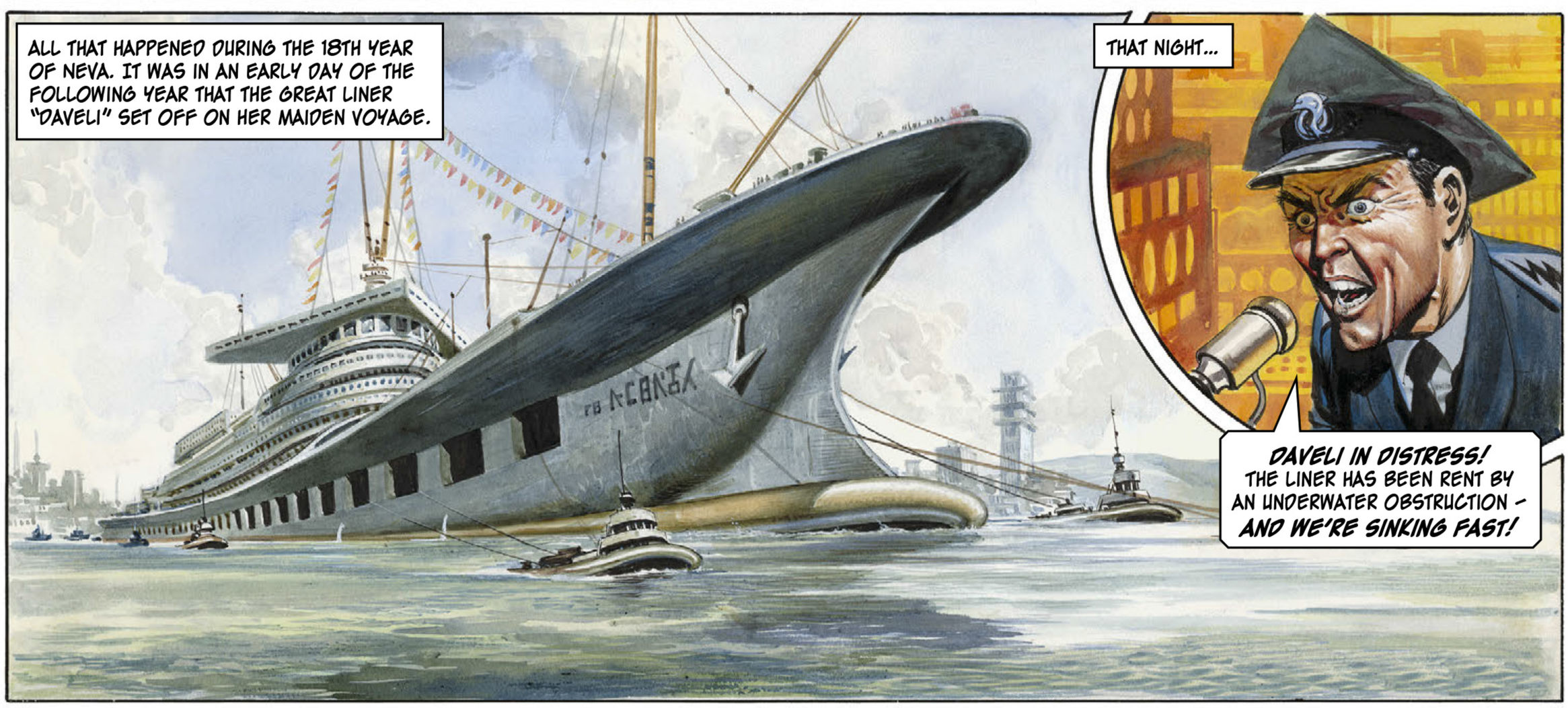

WHEN THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON DIPPED TO THE HORIZON, HE HAD CROSSED THE CONTINENT!
UNCLE, YOUR HAND!
NO, JANNO! LET HIM FINISH UNAIDED!


CHEST HEAVING, THE EMPEROR STOOD ON DRY LAND – AND ADDRESSED THE CHIEF OF THE YOOTH NOMAD HORDE.
THIS LAND IS NOW YOURS! LET YOUR PEOPLE TURN THE WILDERNESS INTO A PLACE OF PLENTY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROPHECY!
THAT WE WILL DO, MIGHTY ONE!

IMPERIAL MAJESTY! ONE THING I ASK ON BEHALF OF MY PEOPLE – LET US BE RECEIVED INTO THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

TRIGO REPLIED.
FROM THIS INSTANT, THE YOOTH NATION SHALL ENTER INTO THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

THE EMPEROR TURNED TO HIS KINSMEN.
AND NOW, I MUST ATTEMPT MY FINAL TASK – WHATEVER THAT IS!
CURSES ON THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL! DON'T THEY KNOW AN EMPEROR WHEN THEY SEE ONE?
THE FOOLS! WHY DON'T THEY FORGET THE FIFTH TASK AFTER ALL YOU'VE DONE?



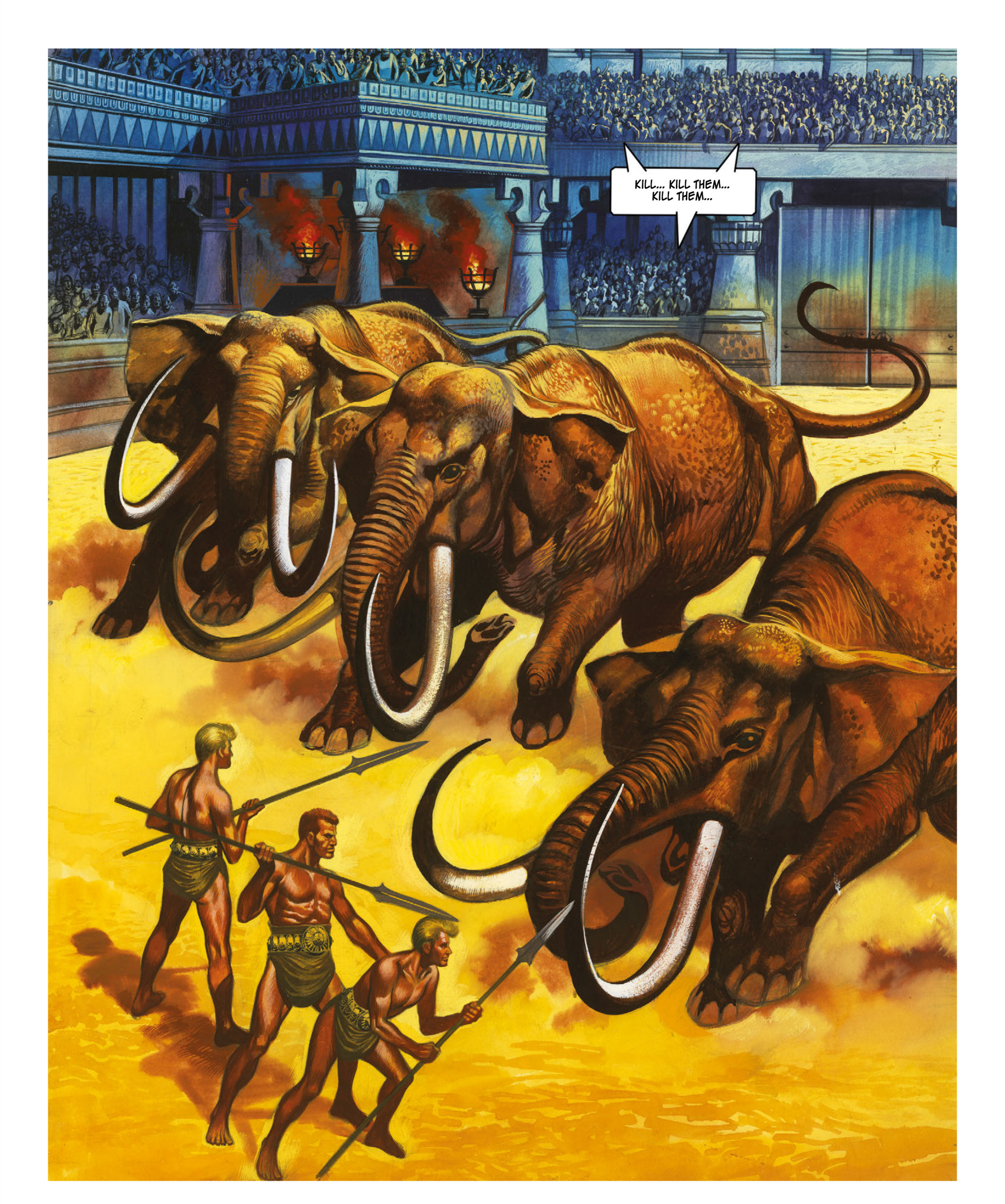
THIS STORY CONTINUES IN **THE RISE AND FALL OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE VOLUME III** AVAILABLE JULY 2021

XXIV

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE BRIEF REIGN OF SENNOS THE FIRST

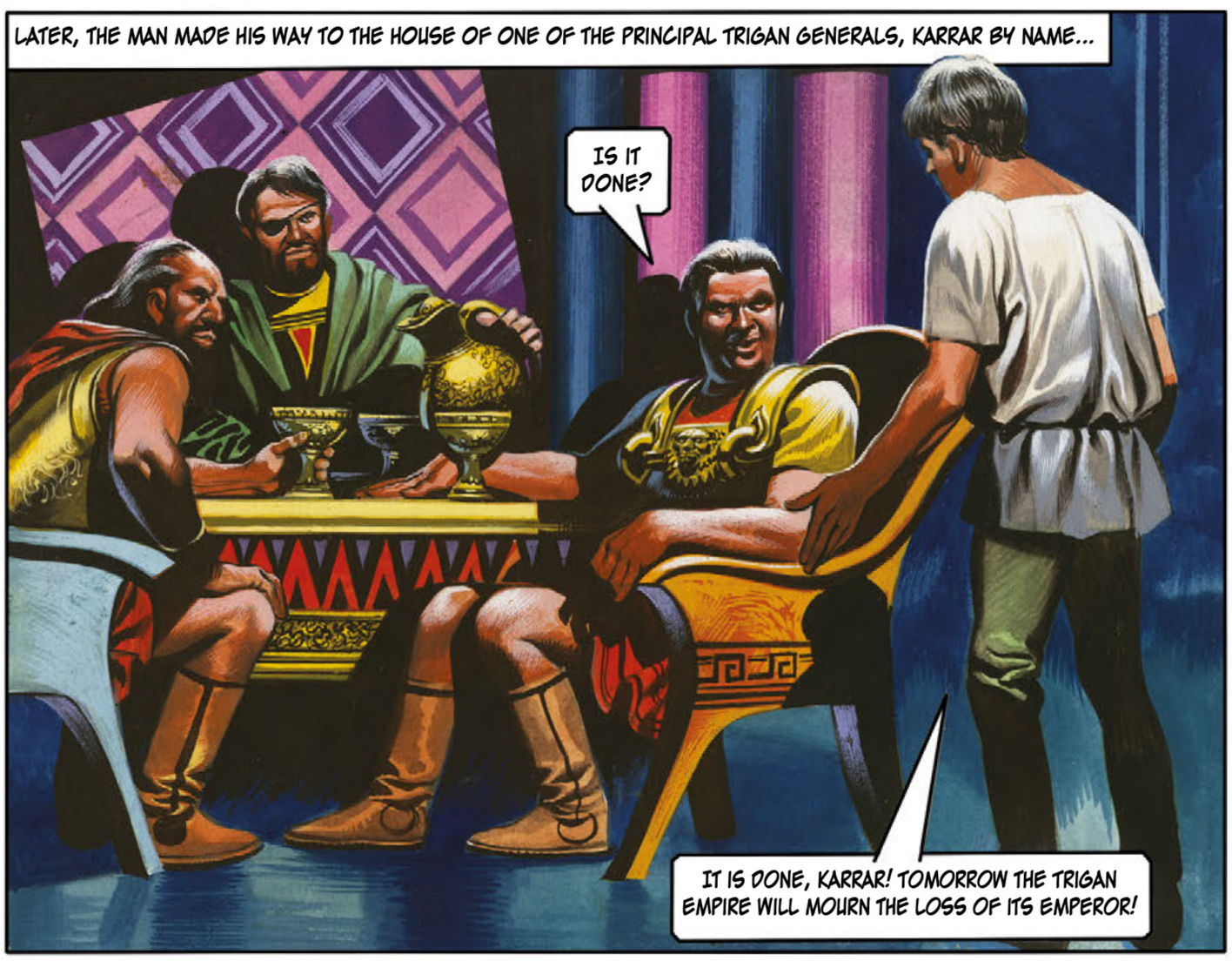
Originally published in *Ranger Book for Boys 1968*

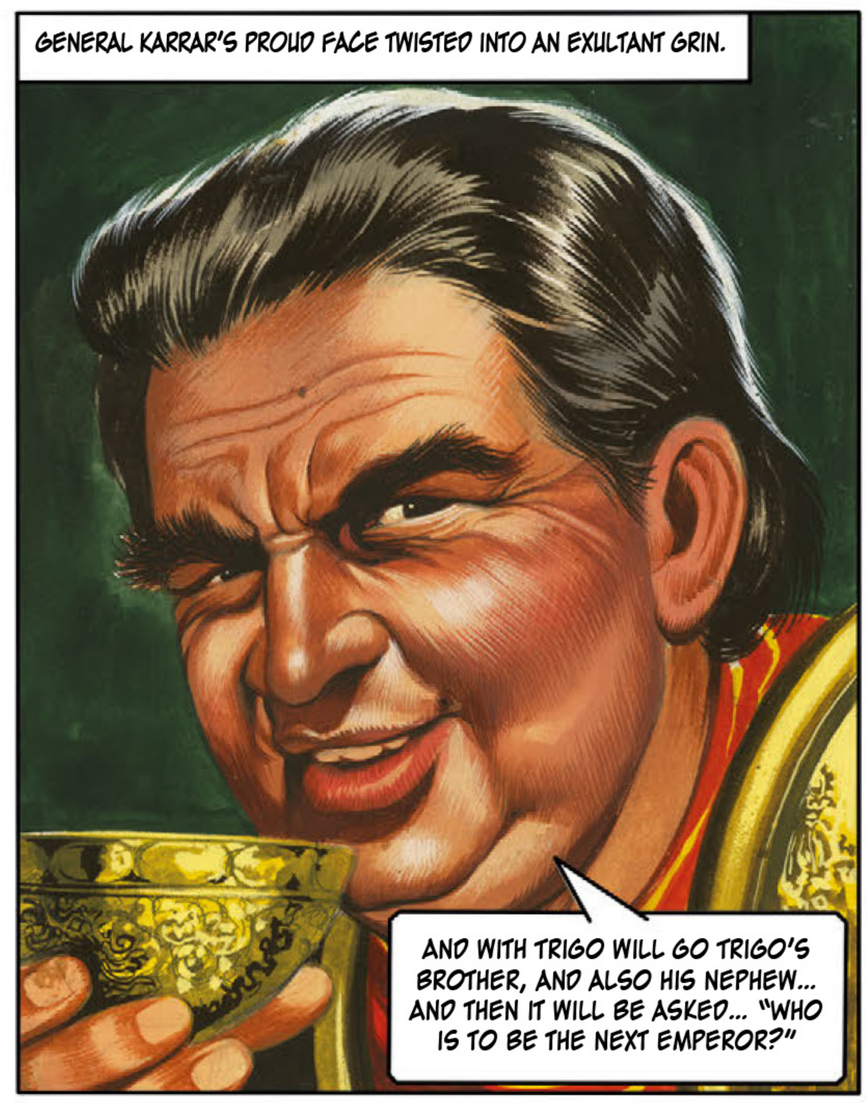

KILL... KILL THEM...
KILL THEM...

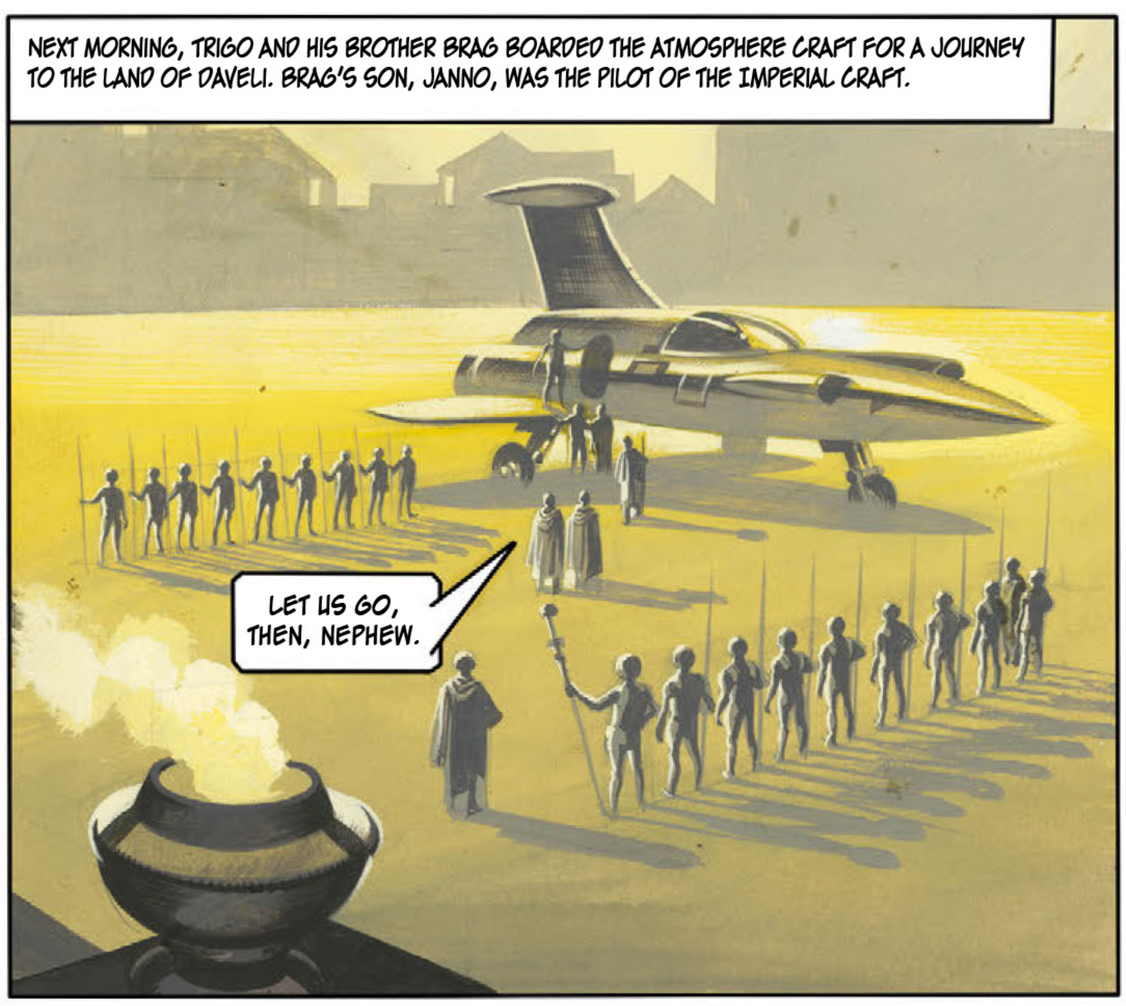
IT HAD ALL BEGAN ONE NIGHT IN TRIGAN CITY. A DARK FIGURE CREPT INTO THE SQUARE, WHERE AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT STOOD NEAR THE WALL OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE.

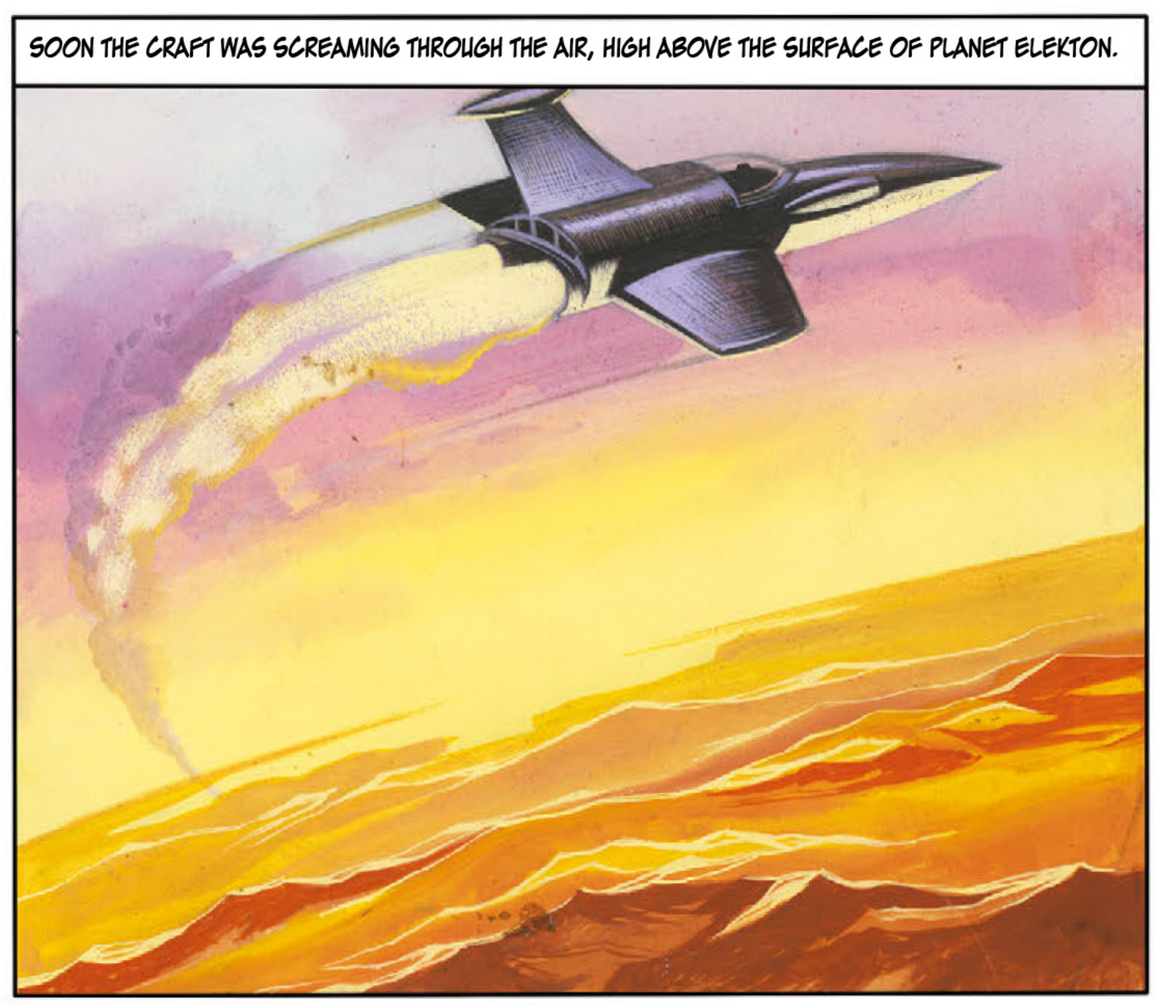
SKILLFULLY AVOIDING THE TWO SENTRIES, THE MARAUDER DREW NEAR TO THE CRAFT...

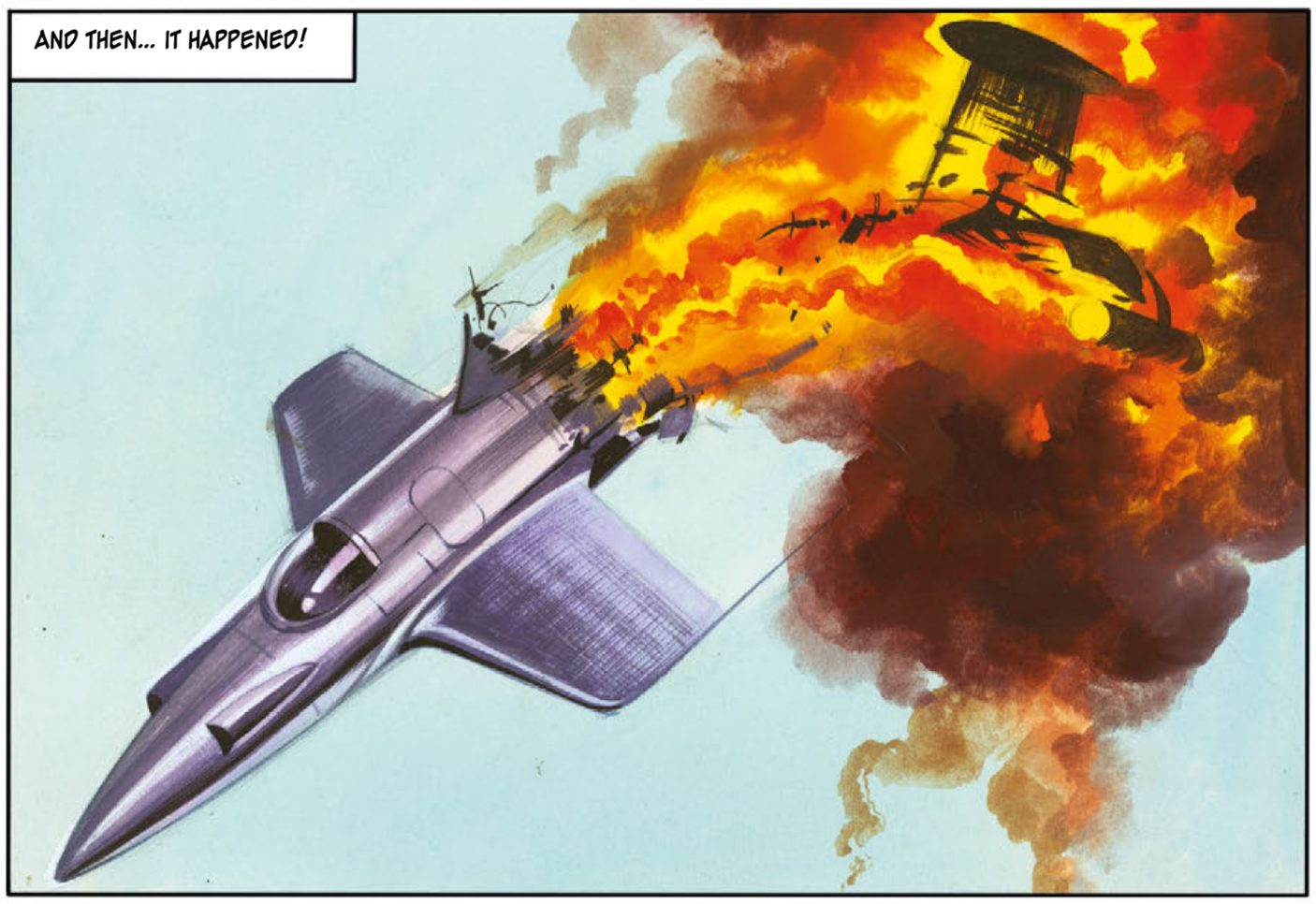
... AND PLACED A METAL TUBE IN ONE OF THE ENGINE OUTLETS


LATER, THE MAN MADE HIS WAY TO THE HOUSE OF ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL TRIGAN GENERALS, KARRAR BY NAME...
IS IT DONE?
IT IS DONE, KARRAR! TOMORROW THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WILL MOURN THE LOSS OF ITS EMPEROR!

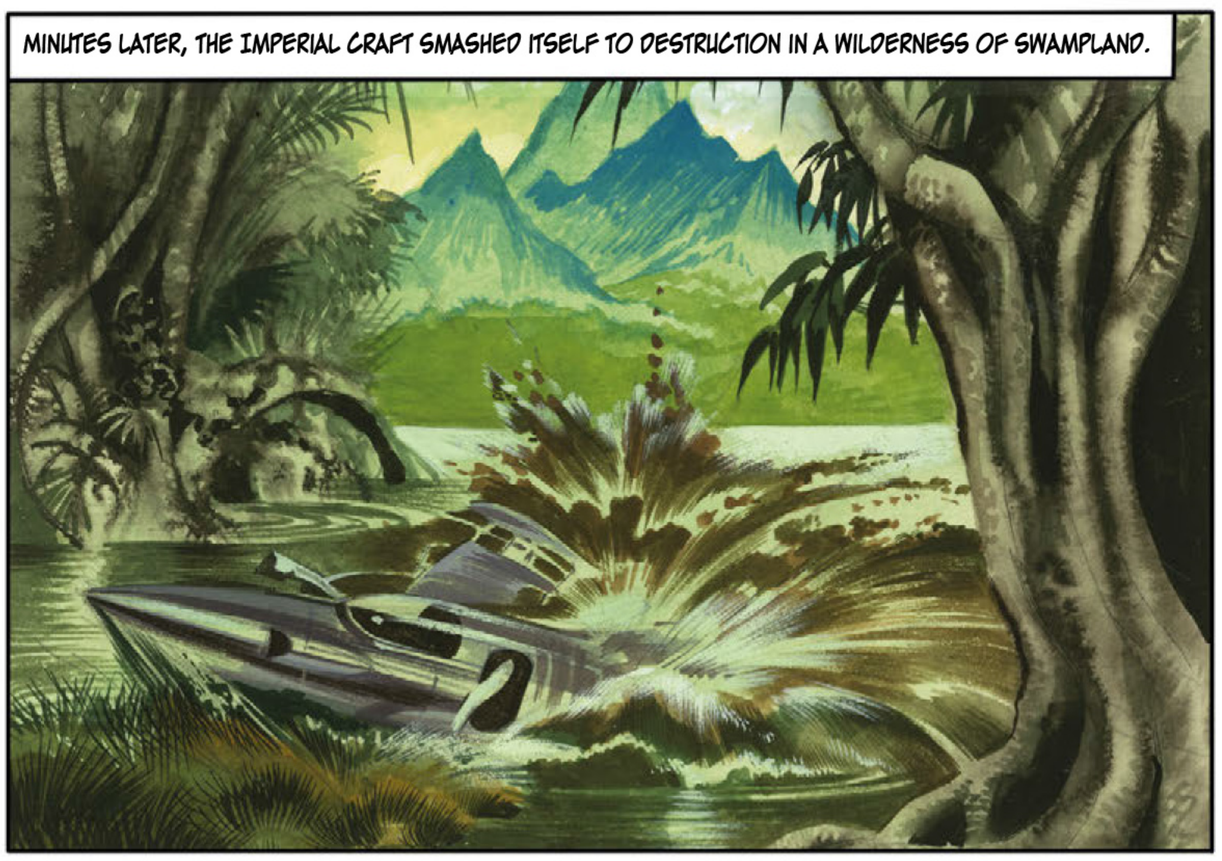

GENERAL KARRAR'S PROUD FACE TWISTED INTO AN EXULTANT GRIN.
AND WITH TRIGO WILL GO TRIGO'S BROTHER, AND ALSO HIS NEPHEW... AND THEN IT WILL BE ASKED... "WHO IS TO BE THE NEXT EMPEROR?"


NEXT MORNING, TRIGO AND HIS BROTHER BRAG BOARDED THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT FOR A JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF DAVELI. BRAG'S SON, JANNO, WAS THE PILOT OF THE IMPERIAL CRAFT.
LET US GO, THEN, NEPHEW.


SOON THE CRAFT WAS SCREAMING THROUGH THE AIR, HIGH ABOVE THE SURFACE OF PLANET ELEKTON.


AND THEN... IT HAPPENED!

JANNO FELT THE CONTROLS DIE UNDER HIS HAND. IN VAIN, HE FOUGHT TO BRING THE DOOMED CRAFT UNDER CONTROL.
WE'RE GOING TO CRASH! THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO!


MINUTES LATER, THE IMPERIAL CRAFT SMASHED ITSELF TO DESTRUCTION IN A WILDERNESS OF SWAMPLAND.

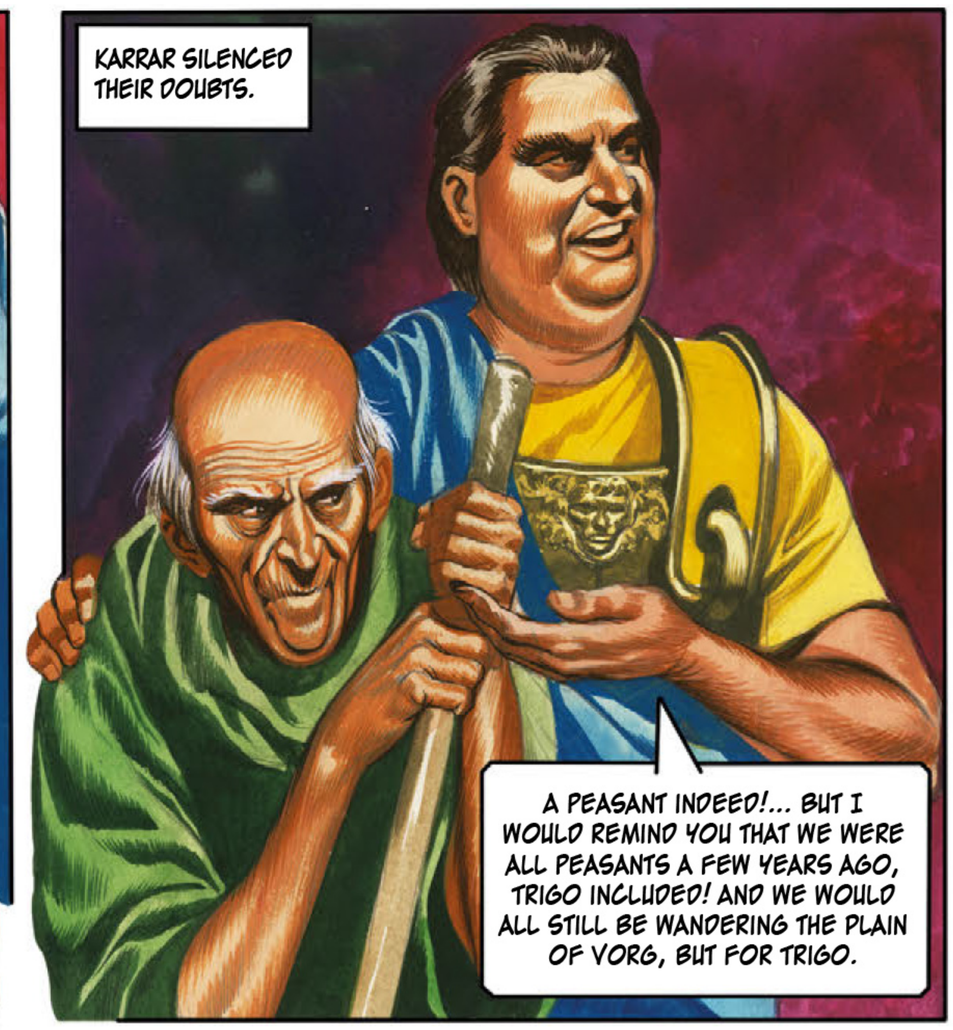
BY THE END OF THE DAY, THE NEWS WAS FLASHED FROM DAVELI TO TRIGAN CITY THAT THE EMPEROR AND HIS COMPANIONS HAD NOT ARRIVED. PANIC REIGNED IN THE CITY.
THE EMPEROR IS MISSING!
THE AIR FLEET WILL SEARCH FROM HERE TO DAVELI!

THE AIR FLEET SEARCHED... BUT THEY NEVER LOCATED THE HALF-SUBMERGED CRAFT IN THE REMOTE SWAMP...

THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE MET SOME DAYS LATER.
IT IS CLEAR THAT TRIGO HAS LOST HIS LIFE, TOGETHER WITH HIS BROTHER BRAG AND HIS NEPHEW JANNO. THE IMPERIAL FAMILY WIPED OUT IN ONE BLOW! WHO, THEN, IS TO BE OUR NEXT EMPEROR?

THEN KARRAR SPOKE...
YOU ARE MISTAKEN, MY FRIEND! ONE MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY STILL LIVES... A DISTANT RELATIVE, IT IS TRUE, AND KNOWN ONLY TO A FEW... BUT THE IMPERIAL BLOOD RUNS IN HIS VEINS!

A SIGNAL FROM KARRAR, AND HIS TWO ACCOMPLICES LED AN OLD MAN INTO THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.
THAT DODDERING OLD FOOL?... A MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY?
KARRAR MUST BE OUT OF HIS MIND!
WHY, THE FELLOW IS NOTHING BUT A PEASANT FROM THE PLAIN OF VORG!

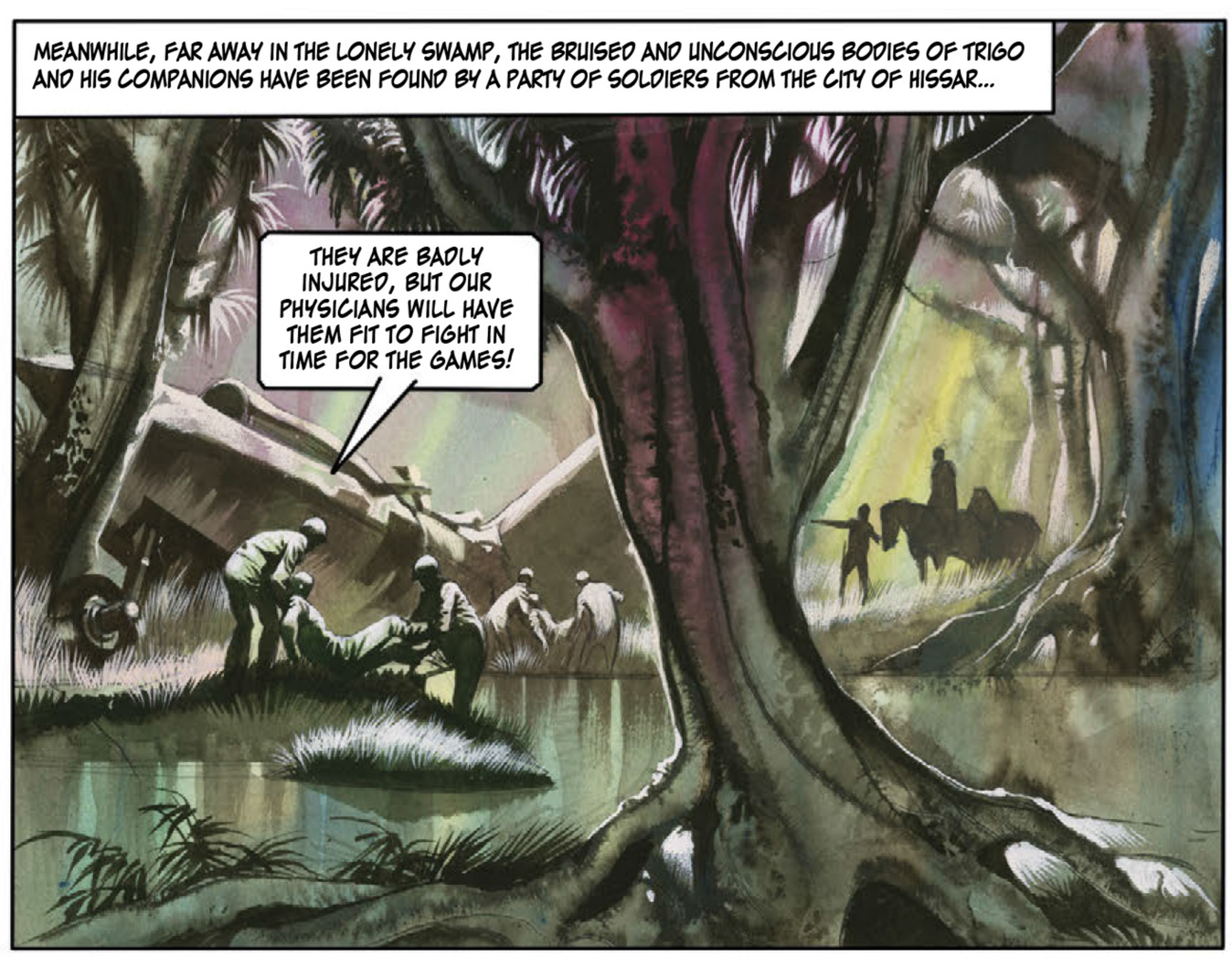

KARRAR SILENCED THEIR DOUBTS.
A PEASANT INDEED!... BUT I WOULD REMIND YOU THAT WE WERE ALL PEASANTS A FEW YEARS AGO, TRIGO INCLUDED! AND WE WOULD ALL STILL BE WANDERING THE PLAIN OF VORG, BUT FOR TRIGO.

THE KARRAR PRODUCED UNDOUBTED PROOF THAT THE OLD MAN, SENNOS, WAS INDEED TRIGO'S GREAT UNCLE... AND SO IT WAS THAT THE OLD PEASANT WAS DECLARED RULER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!
SENNOS THE FIRST, EMPEROR OF TRIGAN, WE SALUTE YOU!

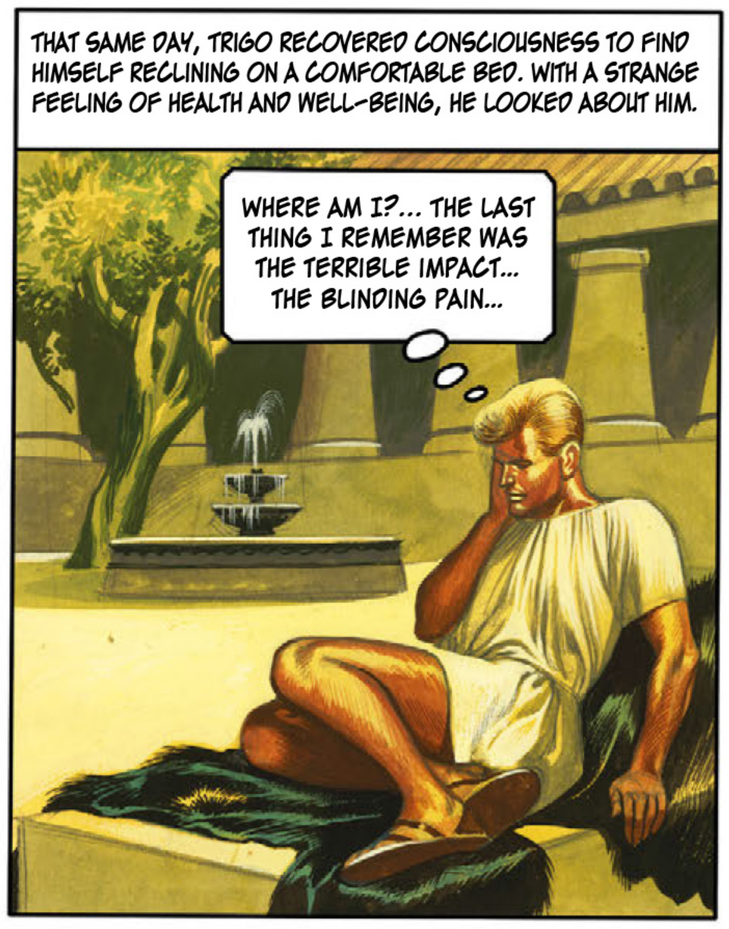
THEY DRESSED THE OLD MAN IN THE IMPERIAL TRAPPINGS... AND KARRAR WHISPERED TO HIS ACCOMPLICES.
THE OLD DOTARD CAN NEITHER READ NOR WRITE, AND HE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE TELL HIM!... FROM NOW ON WE SHALL BE THE TRUE RULERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!

THE SCHEMING GENERALS LOST NO TIME IN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEIR NEW POWER.
WILL YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY BE SO GRACIOUS AS TO SIGN THIS? THERE IS NO NEED FOR YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY TO BOTHER HIS HEAD ABOUT THE CONTENTS.
AND IF YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY CANNOT WRITE...
... JUST MAKE A MARK!

THE NEW EMPEROR'S FIRST PROCLAMATION WAS READ TO THE HORRIFIED CITIZENS IN THE GREAT SQUARE.
BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR, ALL CITIZENS WILL HAND OVER HALF THEIR WEALTH TO THE IMPERIAL TREASURY...
WHAT'S THIS?... SENNOS TAKING HALF OUR MONEY!
BUT... THIS IS TYRANNY!


MEANWHILE, FAR AWAY IN THE LONELY SWAMP, THE BRUISED AND UNCONSCIOUS BODIES OF TRIGO AND HIS COMPANIONS HAVE BEEN FOUND BY A PARTY OF SOLDIERS FROM THE CITY OF HISSAR...
THEY ARE BADLY INJURED, BUT OUR PHYSICIANS WILL HAVE THEM FIT TO FIGHT IN TIME FOR THE GAMES!

HISSAR WAS A SMALL, WARLIKE STATE WITH ITS OWN BARBARIC CUSTOMS. THE THREE PRISONERS WERE CARRIED TO THE MAIN TEMPLE OF THE CITY AND HANDED OVER TO THE PHYSICIAN-PRIESTS.
USE YOUR SECRET ARTS AND MAKE THEM WELL. THREE SUCH STRONGLY-BUILT MEN WILL MAKE A FINE SIGHT IN COMBAT WITH THE MASSADINS.
IT SHALL BE DONE!


THAT SAME DAY, TRIGO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS TO FIND HIMSELF RECLINING ON A COMFORTABLE BED. WITH A STRANGE FEELING OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, HE LOOKED ABOUT HIM.
WHERE AM I?... THE LAST THING I REMEMBER WAS THE TERRIBLE IMPACT... THE BLINDING PAIN...

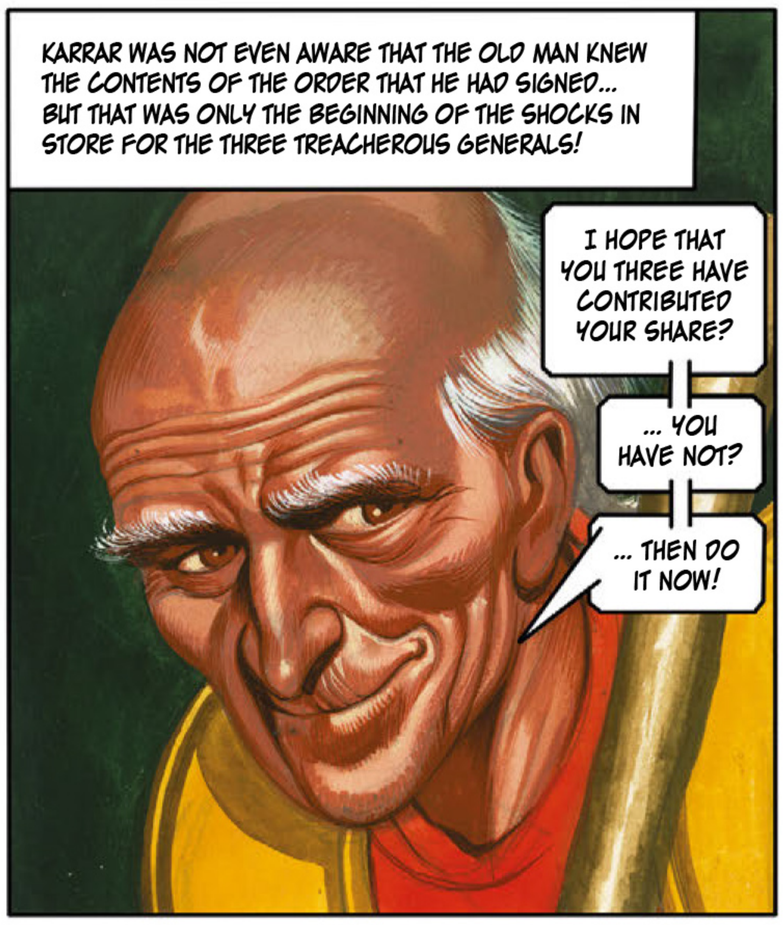
THEN HE SAW THAT HE WAS NOT ALONE. BRAG AND YOUNG JANNO WERE WITH HIM, BOTH LOOKING NONE THE WORSE FOR THEIR TERRIBLE ORDEAL.
SO WE ALL SURVIVED THE CRASH!
YES, AND WE ARE IN HISSAR. THE PRIESTS OF HISSAR ARE ADEPTS IN MEDICINE, YOU KNOW. THEY HAVE MENDED OUR BODIES LIKE NEW.

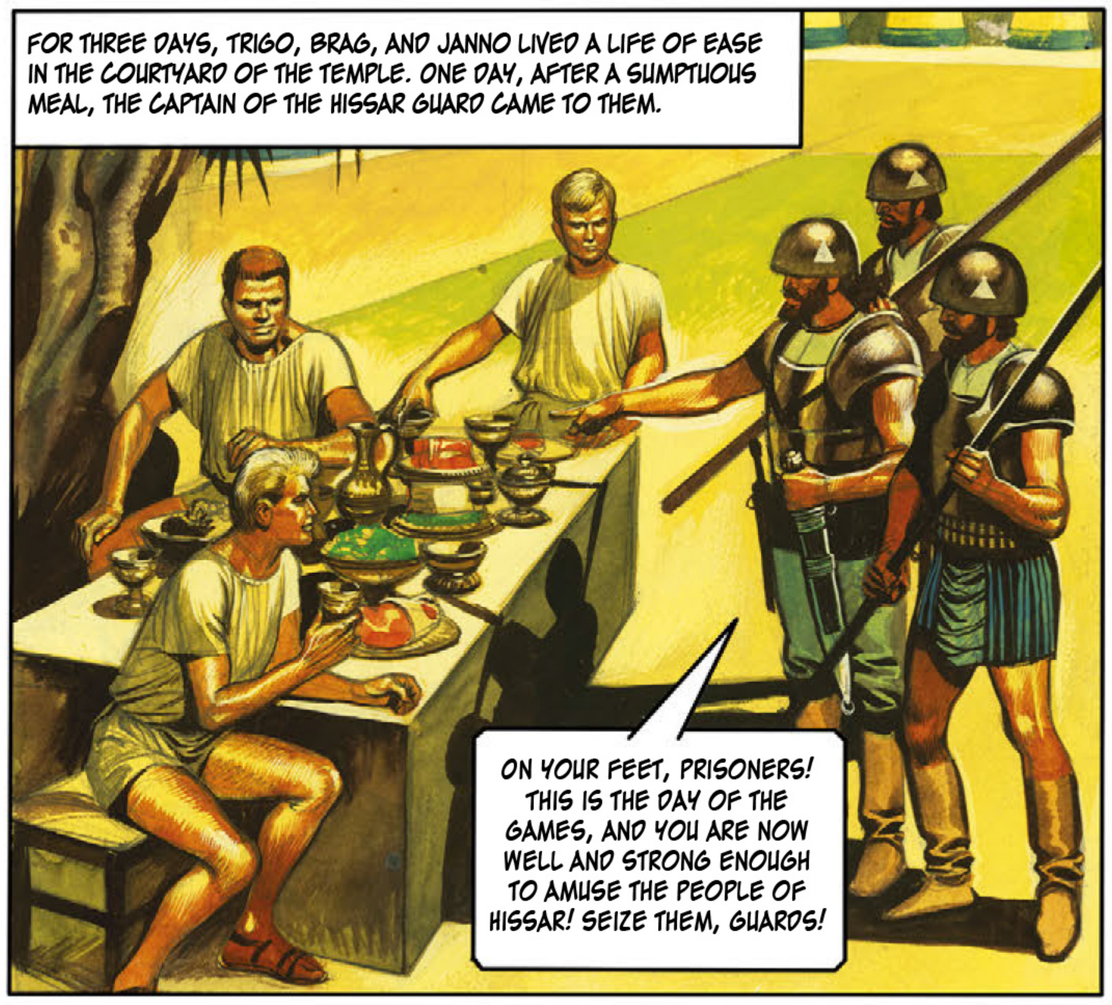
GOOD!... AND NOW WE MUST RETURN TO TRIGAN CITY. THE PEOPLE WILL THINK WE HAVE BEEN KILLED.
AH!... BUT THAT IS WHERE THE DIFFICULTY ARISES... LOOK!

GUARDING THE EXIT FROM THE COURTYARD... A LINE OF GRIM-FACED HISSAR GUARDS!
YOU MEAN... WE'RE PRISONERS?... WHY?
WE SHALL KNOW SOON ENOUGH, I DON'T DOUBT... THE PEOPLE OF HISSAR ARE A STRANGE LOT, WITH SOME VERY UNPLEASANT CUSTOMS... PARTICULARLY WHERE PRISONERS ARE CONCERNED!

AT THAT SAME TIME, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE FRIGHTENED AND ANGRY CITIZENS WERE CARRYING HALF THEIR POSSESSIONS INTO THE IMPERIAL TREASURY, WHILE KARRAR AND HIS ACCOMPLICES LOOKED ON.
TO THINK OF IT... ALL THAT WEALTH IS OURS!
AND THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

THEY TURNED TO SEE THE EMPEROR STANDING NEAR THEM. HE SPOKE... AND HIS VOICE WAS STRANGELY POWERFUL FOR A MAN OF HIS AGE.
AH!... I SEE THAT THE PEOPLE HAVE OBEYED MY ORDER... EXCELLENT!... EXCELLENT!
ER... YES... ER, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY.


KARRAR WAS NOT EVEN AWARE THAT THE OLD MAN KNEW THE CONTENTS OF THE ORDER THAT HE HAD SIGNED... BUT THAT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE SHOCKS IN STORE FOR THE THREE TREACHEROUS GENERALS!
I HOPE THAT YOU THREE HAVE CONTRIBUTED YOUR SHARE?
... YOU HAVE NOT?
... THEN DO IT NOW!

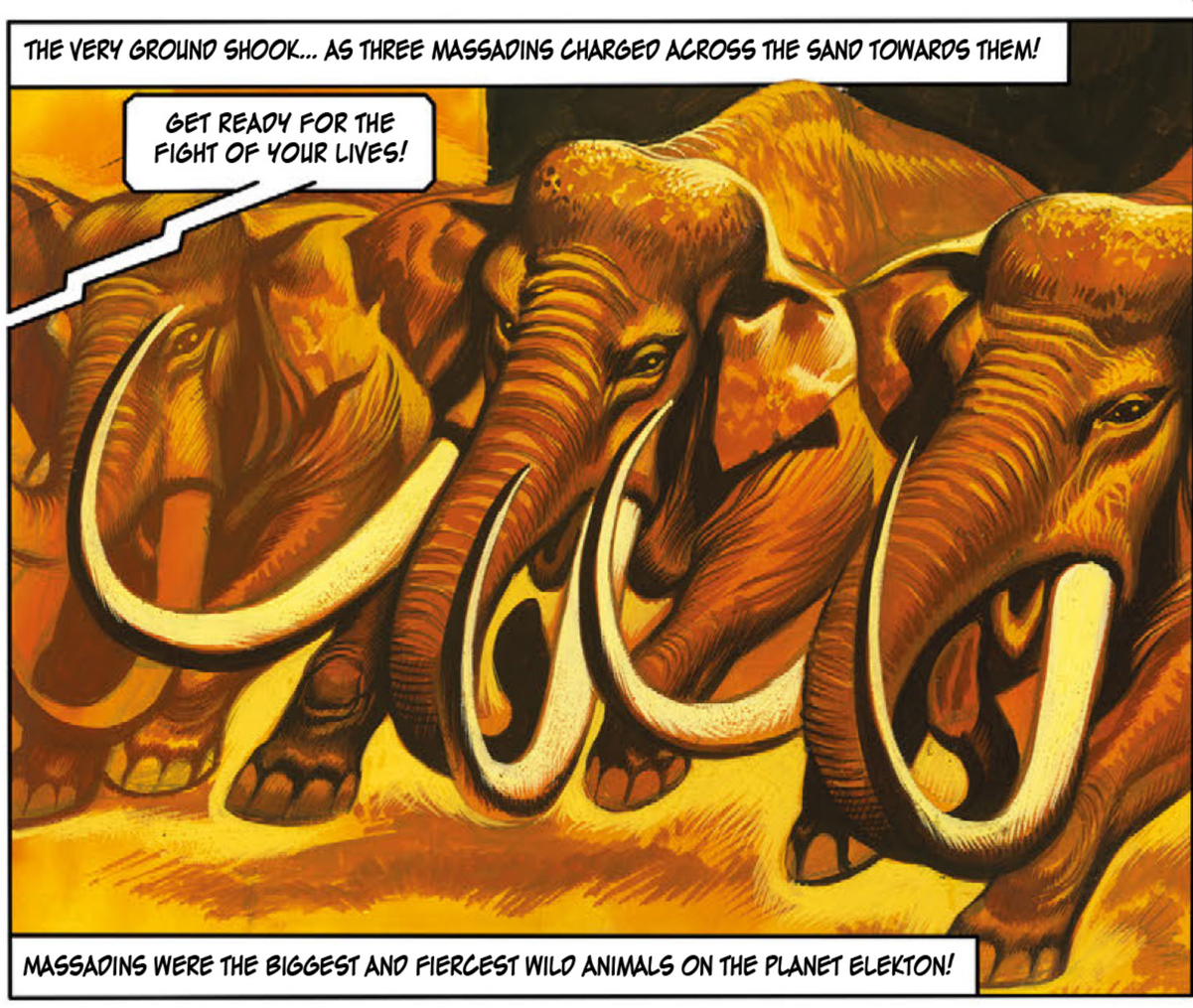

FOR THREE DAYS, TRIGO, BRAG, AND JANNO LIVED A LIFE OF EASE IN THE COURTYARD OF THE TEMPLE. ONE DAY, AFTER A SUMPTUOUS MEAL, THE CAPTAIN OF THE HISSAR GUARD CAME TO THEM.
ON YOUR FEET, PRISONERS! THIS IS THE DAY OF THE GAMES, AND YOU ARE NOW WELL AND STRONG ENOUGH TO AMUSE THE PEOPLE OF HISSAR! SEIZE THEM, GUARDS!

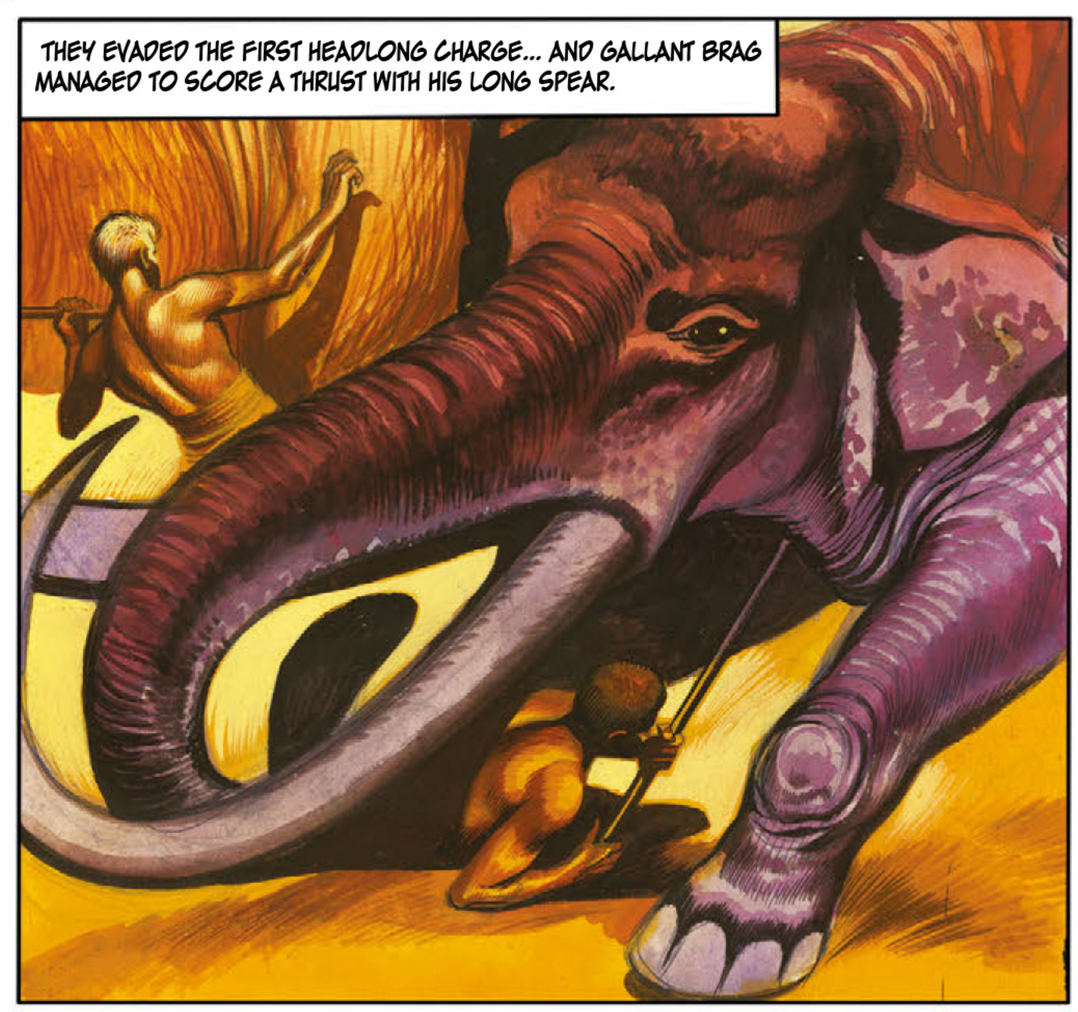
THE THREE TRIGANS FOUGHT MANFULLY, BUT THEY WERE SOON OVERPOWERED.
TO THE AMPHITHEATRE!... THEY ARE TO BE THE OPENING TURN OF THE GAMES!

THEY WERE DRAGGED TO THE TOWERING BUILDING WHERE THE CITIZENS OF HISSAR WERE PACKED TO WITNESS THE SPECTACLE OF CRUELTY WHICH THEY WERE PLEASED TO CALL "GAMES"...
WHY ARE WE WAITING?... LET THE GAMES BEGIN!
PATIENCE, MY FRIENDS!... PATIENCE!

THE FIRST ITEM FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT BEGINS AT ONCE... THREE WELL-MUSCLED PRISONERS WILL FIGHT WITH SPEARS AGAINST THREE ENRAGED MASSADINS!

TRIGO, BRAG, AND JANNO FOUND THEMSELVES OUT IN THE BLINDING SUNLIGHT OF THE GREAT ARENA WITH SPEARS IN THEIR HANDS...
BY ALL THE STARS... WHAT NOW?
LOOK!

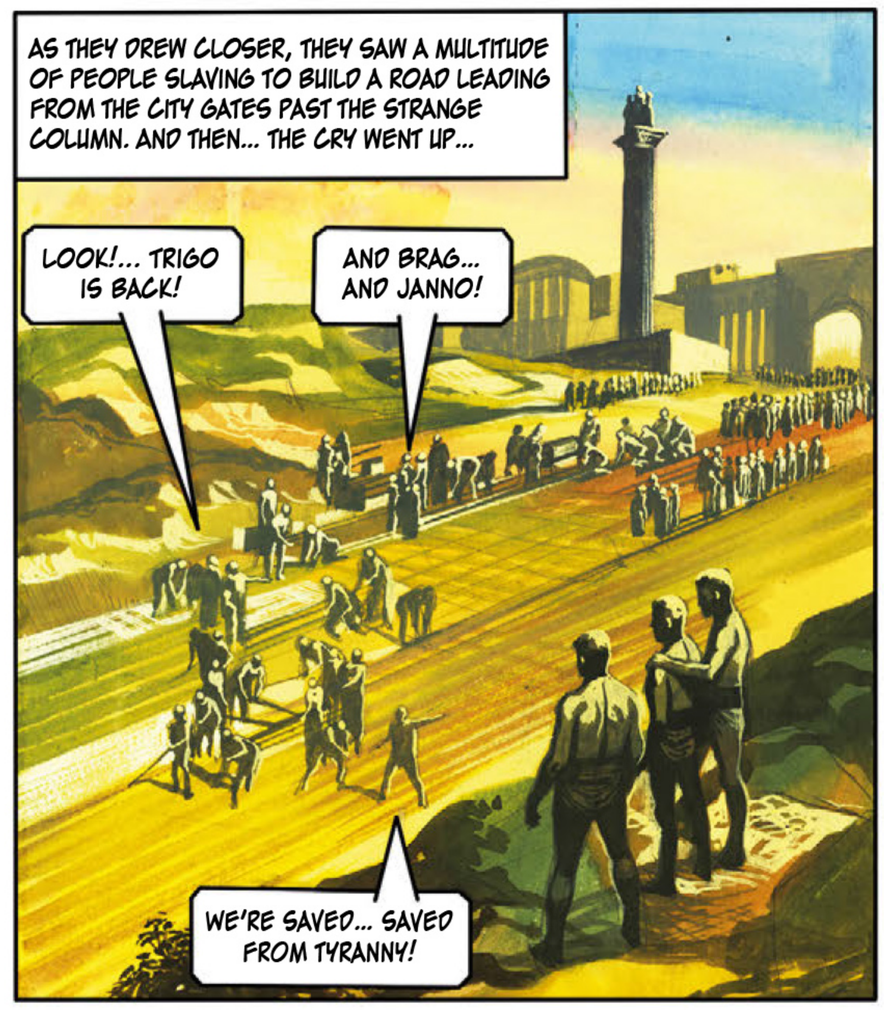

THE VERY GROUND SHOOK... AS THREE MASSADINS CHARGED ACROSS THE SAND TOWARDS THEM!
GET READY FOR THE FIGHT OF YOUR LIVES!
MASSADINS WERE THE BIGGEST AND FIERCEST WILD ANIMALS ON THE PLANET ELEKTON!

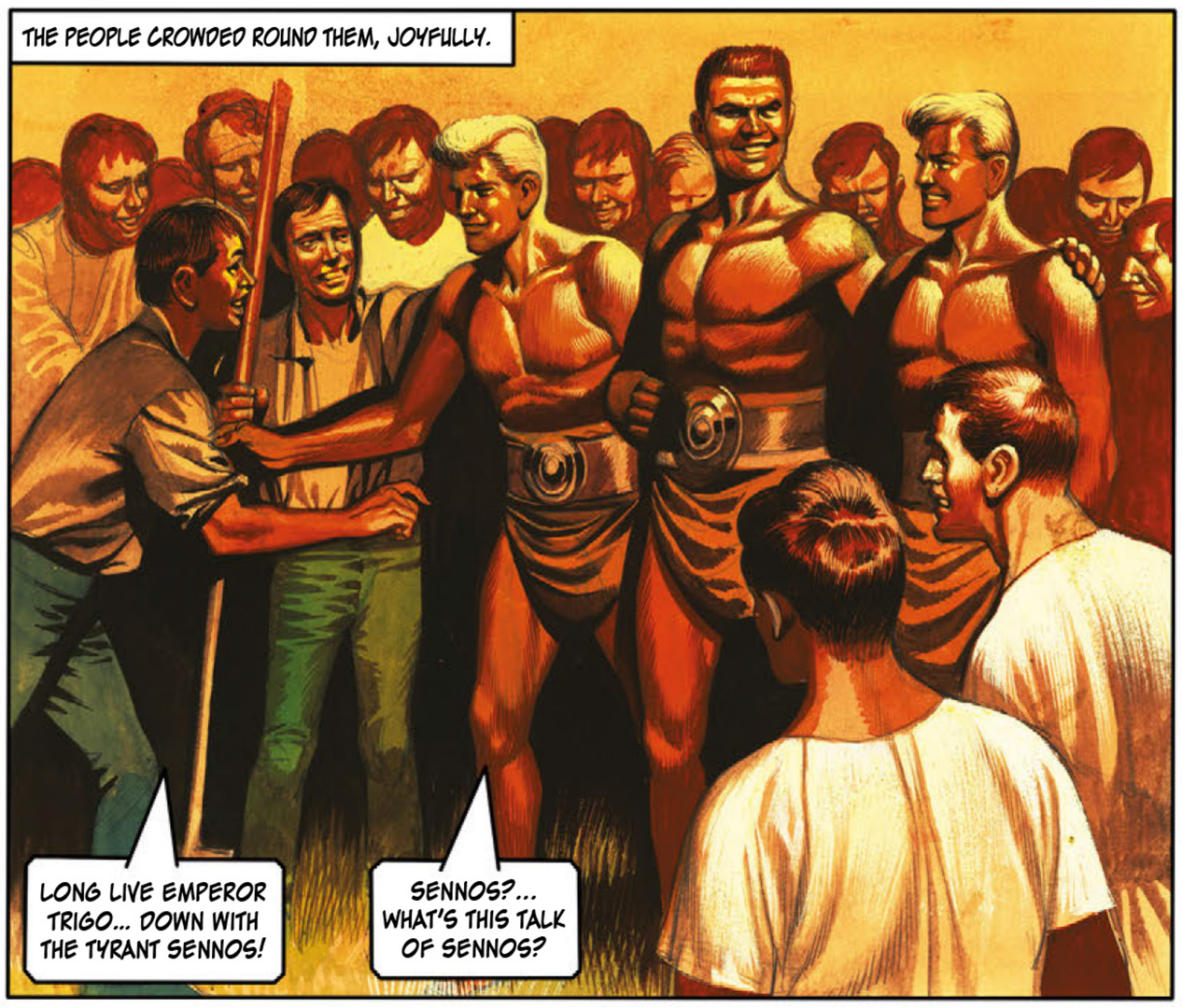

THEY EVADED THE FIRST HEADLONG CHARGE... AND GALLANT BRAG MANAGED TO SCORE A THRUST WITH HIS LONG SPEAR.

... BUT TRIGO KNEW THAT IT WAS A FIGHT WHICH COULD HAVE ONLY ONE ENDING...
HERE THEY COME AGAIN!
UNLESS WE CAN FIND A BETTER WEAPON THAN SPEARS, WE ARE DONE FOR!
THE MASSADINS CAME ON MORE CAUTIOUSLY NEXT TIME, AND JANNO WAS SENT REELING BY A BLOW FROM A MIGHTY TRUNK. AS HIS FATHER STOOPED TO DRAG HIM CLEAR, TRIGO'S KEEN EYES FLICKERED TO THE SACRED FLAMES BURNING ABOVE HIM...
FLAME!... THERE IS NOTHING A MASSADIN FEARS BUT FLAME!
IN ONE BOUND, THE EMPEROR OF TRIGAN LEAPT TO THE PARAPET ABOVE AND SEIZED THE BRAZIER OF FLAME...
STOP HIM!
THERE WAS NO STOPPING TRIGO. HE LEAPT BACK INTO THE ARENA JUST AS THE MASSADINS WERE MAKING THEIR LAST CHARGE AT BRAG AND HIS UNCONSCIOUS BURDEN.
TRIGO!
THIS IS OUR ONLY CHANCE, BRAG!
HE FLUNG THE FLAMING BRAZIER FULL INTO THE MASS OF ONCOMING FLESH AND BONE...
TAKE THAT!
THE MASSADINS SLITHERED TO A HALT, SQUEALING WITH TERROR.
NEXT INSTANT, THEY TURNED TAIL AND HURTLED STRAIGHT FOR THE GREAT DOORS OF THE ARENA... BURSTING THEM ASUNDER!
AAAAAAGH!... THE MASSADINS ARE LOOSE!
AFTER THEM, BRAG!
MOST OF THE CITIZENS OF HISSAR WERE WATCHING THE GAMES. THE MASSADINS CLEARED A PATH OF TERROR THROUGH THE NEARLY DESERTED STREETS OF THE CITY... AND THE THREE TRIGANS FOLLOWED IN THEIR WAKE!
THE MASSADINS HAVE ESCAPED!
KEEP MOVING, BRAG... WE'RE NEARLY FREE!

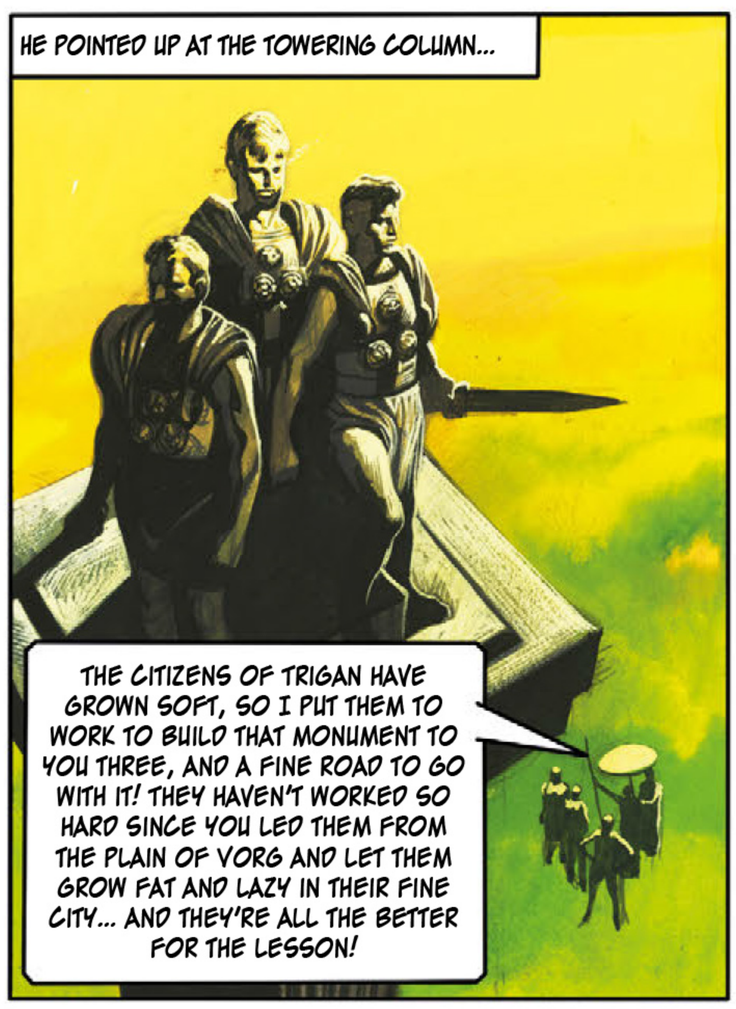
NIGHTFALL SAW THEM WELL CLEAR OF THE CITY AND OUT ON THE PLAIN, SAFE FROM ALL PURSUIT.
WHAT... WHAT HAPPENED?
WE ARE SAFE, SON... AND ON OUR WAY BACK TO TRIGAN!
IT WILL BE A LONG WALK ... BUT WE'LL MAKE IT!

TWO DAYS LATER, NEARLY DROPPING WITH FATIGUE, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THEIR HOME CITY. AND THEN THEY NOTICED SOMETHING NEW... SOMETHING DIFFERENT...
WHAT IS THAT TALL COLUMN STANDING THERE OUTSIDE THE CITY?
STRANGE!... WHOEVER BUILT THAT... AND WHY?

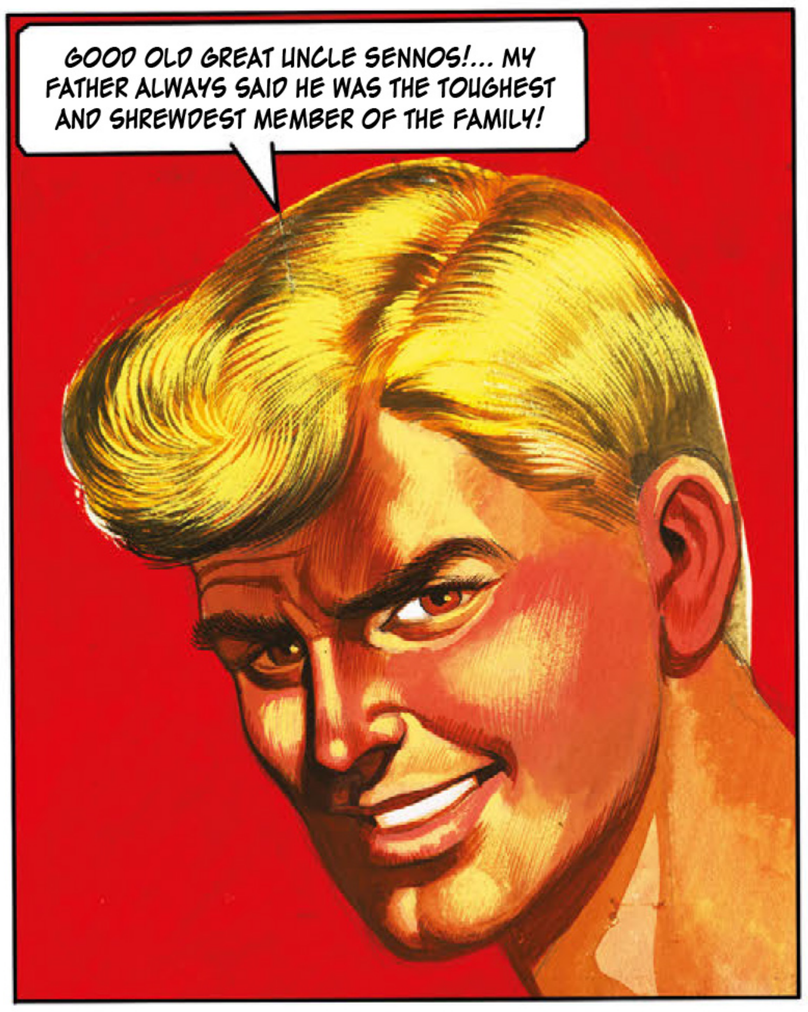

AS THEY DREW CLOSER, THEY SAW A MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE SLAVING TO BUILD A ROAD LEADING FROM THE CITY GATES PAST THE STRANGE COLUMN. AND THEN... THE CRY WENT UP...
LOOK!... TRIGO IS BACK!
AND BRAG... AND JANNO!
WE'RE SAVED... SAVED FROM TYRANNY!


THE PEOPLE CROWDED ROUND THEM, JOYFULLY.
LONG LIVE EMPEROR TRIGO... DOWN WITH THE TYRANT SENNOS!
SENNOS?... WHAT'S THIS TALK OF SENNOS?

AND THEN THEY SAW THE OLD MAN IN THE TRAPPINGS OF THE EMPEROR OF TRIGAN.
GREAT UNCLE SENNOS!... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE... DRESSED LIKE THAT?
GLAD TO SEE YOU BACK, TRIGO, MY BOY... THEY MADE ME EMPEROR, YOU KNOW... THOUGHT OLD SENNOS WAS SOFT IN THE HEAD... BUT THEY WERE MISTAKEN!... HEH!... OLD SENNOS MADE THE WHOLE EMPIRE SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE, I CAN TELL YOU!


HE POINTED UP AT THE TOWERING COLUMN...
THE CITIZENS OF TRIGAN HAVE GROWN SOFT, SO I PUT THEM TO WORK TO BUILD THAT MONUMENT TO YOU THREE, AND A FINE ROAD TO GO WITH IT! THEY HAVEN'T WORKED SO HARD SINCE YOU LED THEM FROM THE PLAIN OF VORG AND LET THEM GROW FAT AND LAZY IN THEIR FINE CITY... AND THEY'RE ALL THE BETTER FOR THE LESSON!

WITH THAT, THE AMAZING OLD MAN WALKED OFF ACROSS THE PLAIN... BACK TO THE OBSCURITY OF THE WILDERNESS HE LOVED SO WELL...
BY THE WAY, YOU'LL FIND THREE OF YOUR GENERALS IN PRISON. I SHOULD LET THEM STOP THERE IF I WERE YOU. AND HALF THE CITY'S WEALTH IS IN SAFE KEEPING FOR WHEN TIMES ARE HARD. GOODBYE...
ANY TIME YOU NEED ADVICE ON HOW TO RUN YOUR EMPIRE, JUST SEND FOR YOUR OLD UNCLE SENNOS!


GOOD OLD GREAT UNCLE SENNOS!... MY FATHER ALWAYS SAID HE WAS THE TOUGHEST AND SHREWDEST MEMBER OF THE FAMILY!

+

BONUS MATERIAL

ORIGINAL LETTERING FOR THE TERROR OF MOUNT SPYX

AT THE FAR SIDE OF LAKE VORG, WHERE THE MOUNTAINS SLOPE DOWN TO THE SHORE, WAS THE SUMMER RESORT OF BALA, MUCH BELOVED BY THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN. ONE DAY THE IMPERIAL ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SWOOPED LOW TO LAND IN BALA . . .

Bala . . . the most beautiful place on Elekton!

THE CRAFT WAS TAKING THE EMPEROR TRIGO AND HIS EMPRESS URSA TO THEIR SUMMER PALACE THERE . . .

Bala is indeed beautiful . . . but the sight of Mount Spyx always strikes terror in my heart!

Old father Spyx? What harm could he do you, my dear?

Mount Spyx has not erupted in living memory, Ursa!

THE IMPERIAL SUMMER PALACE WAS A PLEASURE DOME OF DELIGHT, WHERE TRIGO RESTED FROM TIME TO TIME FROM THE PERILS AND TURMOILS OF HIS GREAT POSITION . . .

Welcome, Imperial Majesties . . . all is in readiness for your visit!

TRIGO'S HIGH-SPIRITED YOUNG NEPHEW AND HIS COMRADE KEREN HAD ACCOMPANIED THE IMPERIAL PARTY, AND THE TWO FRIENDS REVELLED IN THE DELIGHTS OF BALA, WHICH INCLUDED SPEAR FISHING IN THE CRYSTAL-CLEAR WATER . . .

Strike now, Janno . . . strike!

OFTEN, WHEN RESTING FROM THEIR FAVOURITE SPORT, JANNO AND KEREN LOOKED UP TO THE TOWERING MASS OF MOUNT SPYX . . .

But what would happen if the volcano did erupt?

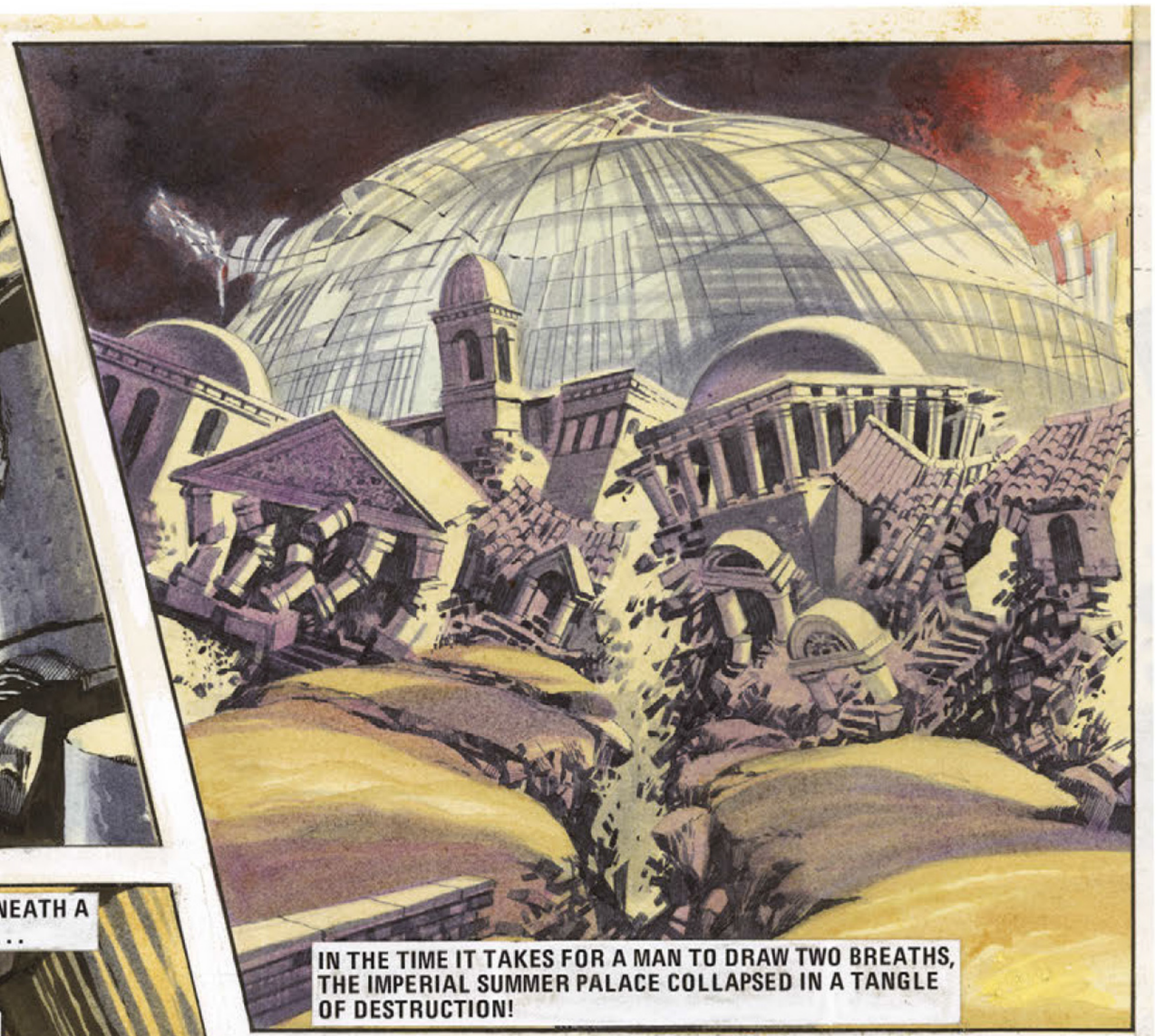
It would be the end of Bala . . . that's for certain!

B20

TWO NIGHTS AFTER THEIR ARRIVAL, JANNO WAS RUDELY AWAKENED BY A DIN LIKE A THUNDERCLAP, AND HIS BED SHOOK BENEATH HIM . . .

What was that?

THEN . . . HE SAW HIS PERIL!

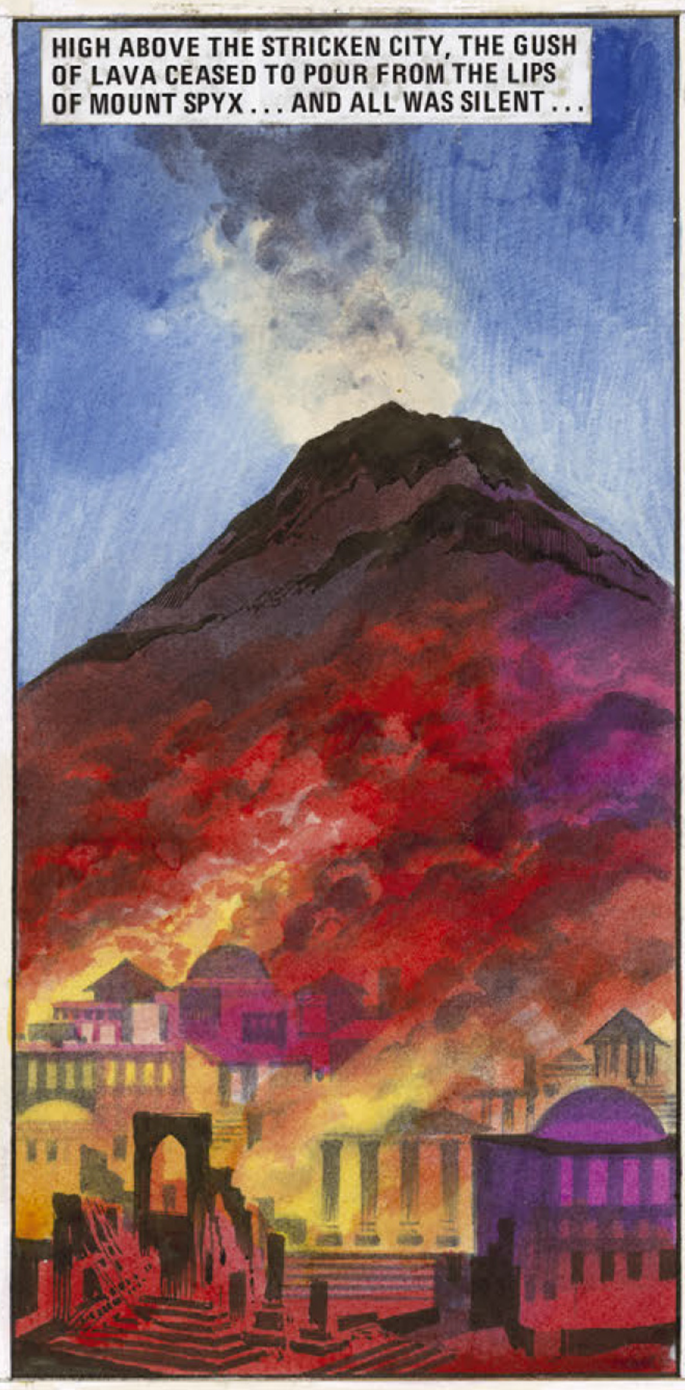

IN THE TIME IT TAKES FOR A MAN TO DRAW TWO BREATHS, THE IMPERIAL SUMMER PALACE COLLAPSED IN A TANGLE OF DESTRUCTION!

KEREN FOUGHT HIS WAY OUT OF HIS RUINED CHAMBER AND LOOKED TOWARDS THE GREAT VOLCANO. GROPING HIS WAY BLINDLY THROUGH THE SMOKE AND TURMOIL, HE HEARD A CRY FOR HELP . . .

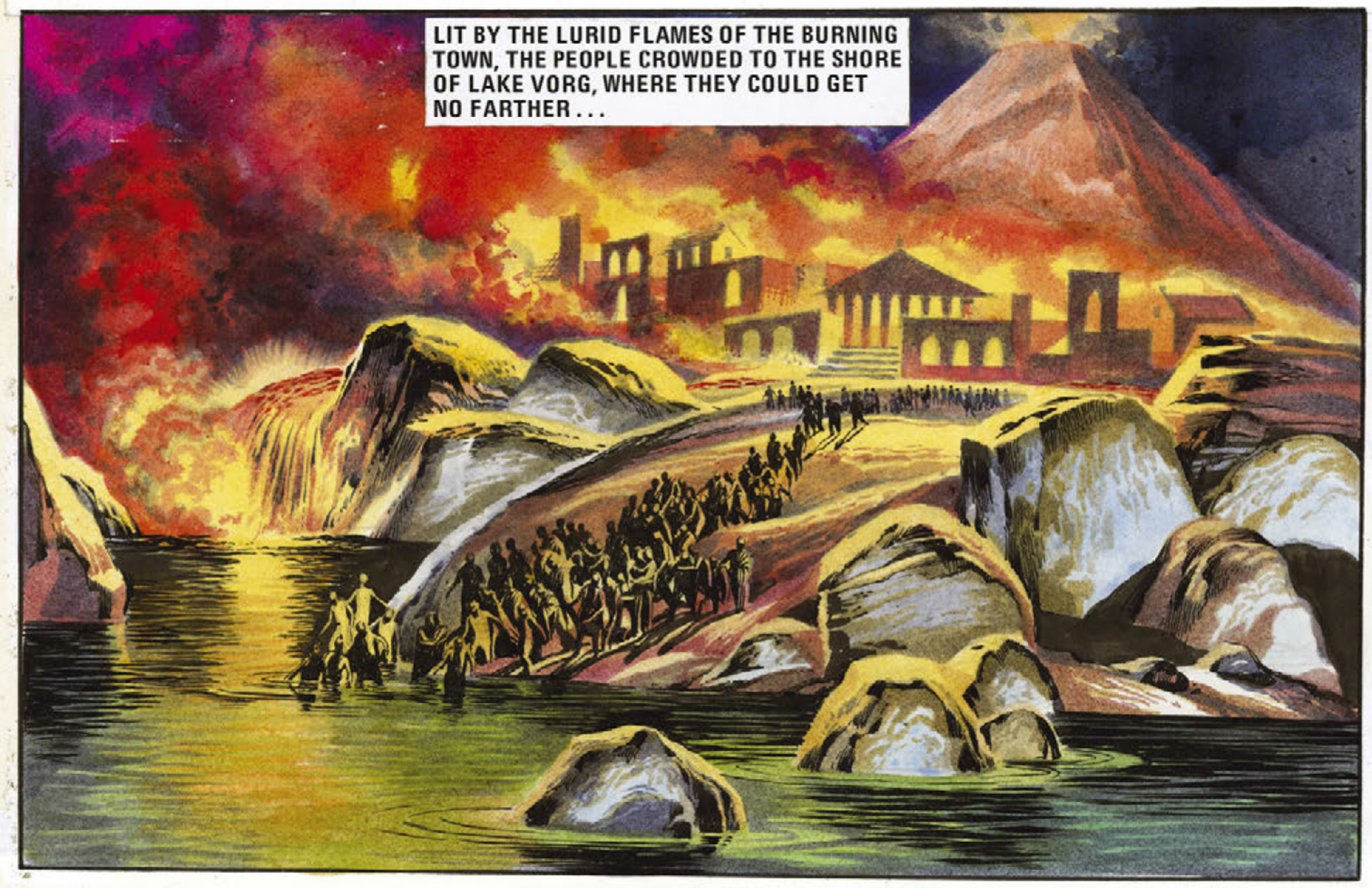
IT WAS JANNO . . . PINNED BENEATH A MASS OF BROKEN MASONRY . . .
I . . . I'm trapped!

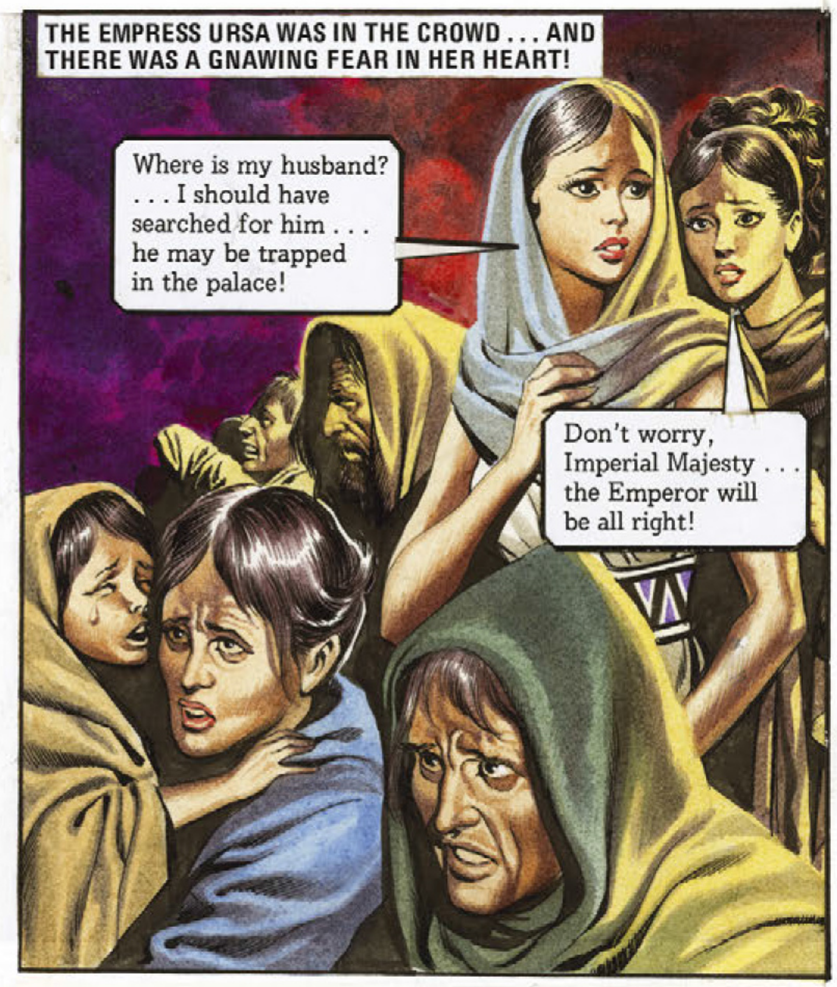
KEREN TRIED TO FREE JANNO IN VAIN . . .
. . . If I can't move this thing, we'll perish together!

MEANWHILE, THE SURVIVORS FROM THE FIRST FEARFUL VOLCANIC TREMOR WERE FLEEING DOWN TO THE THE LAKE SHORE TO ESCAPE THE WALL OF MOLTEN LAVA . . .
There's no escape! The craft are all destroyed!
Make for the water . . . it's our only hope!


HIGH ABOVE THE STRICKEN CITY, THE GUSH OF LAVA CEASED TO POUR FROM THE LIPS OF MOUNT SPYX . . . AND ALL WAS SILENT . . .

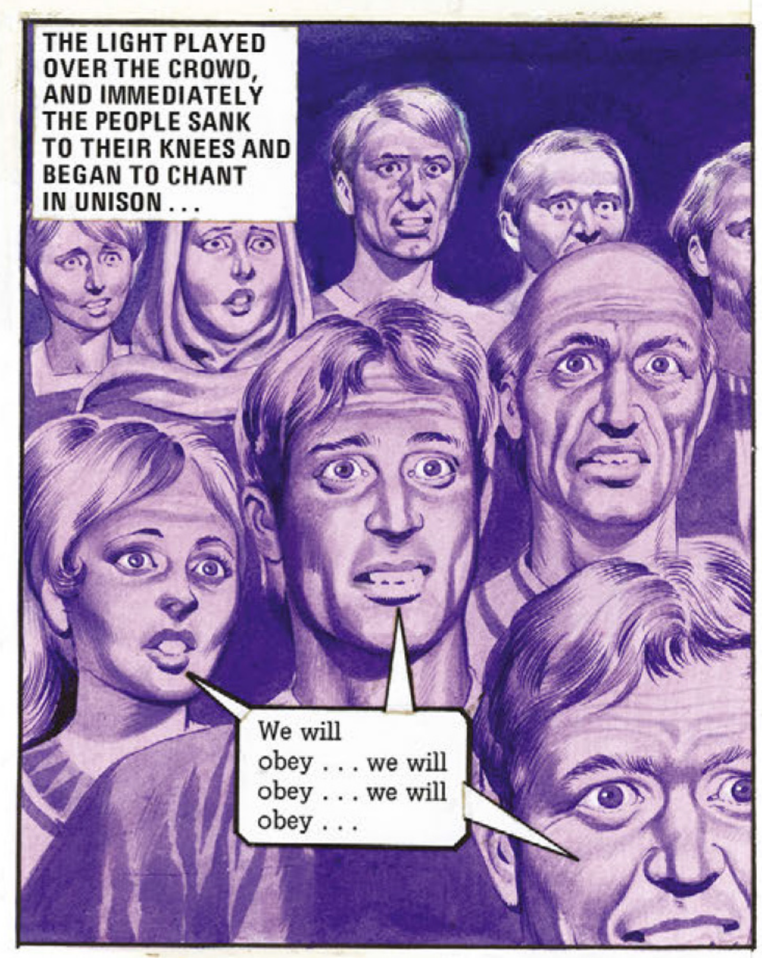
AND THEN . . . IT HAPPENED!
FROM OUT OF THE BLACK ABYSS ROSE A STRANGE CRAFT . . . COMING FROM THE UNKNOWN DEPTHS OF THE VOLCANO ON ITS TAIL OF FIRE!


LIT BY THE LURID FLAMES OF THE BURNING TOWN, THE PEOPLE CROWDED TO THE SHORE OF LAKE VORG, WHERE THEY COULD GET NO FARTHER . . .


THE EMPRESS URSA WAS IN THE CROWD . . . AND THERE WAS A GNAWING FEAR IN HER HEART!
Where is my husband? . . . I should have searched for him . . . he may be trapped in the palace!
Don't worry, Imperial Majesty . . . the Emperor will be all right!

THEN ALL EYES TURNED SKYWARDS, AS A STRANGE CRAFT DESCENDED TO THE LAKE SHORE UPON A TAIL OF STABBING FLAME . . .
Look . . . someone's come to save us!
But what craft is that? I never saw the like before!

IT CAME TO REST, AND FROM THE TOP OF THE TOWERING CYLINDER, A STRANGE PURPLE LIGHT BURNED . . .


THE LIGHT PLAYED OVER THE CROWD, AND IMMEDIATELY THE PEOPLE SANK TO THEIR KNEES AND BEGAN TO CHANT IN UNISON . . .
We will obey . . . we will obey . . . we will obey . . .

THEN A GREAT DOOR SLID OPEN IN THE VAST HULL, AND, AS IF AT A WORD OF COMMAND, THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO FILE UP INTO THE MYSTERIOUS CRAFT . . .
B21

WHEN THE LAST PERSON WAS SWALLOWED UP, THE DOOR CLOSED. AND THEN THE CRAFT ROSE AGAIN INTO THE NIGHT SKY . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MIKE BUTTERWORTH

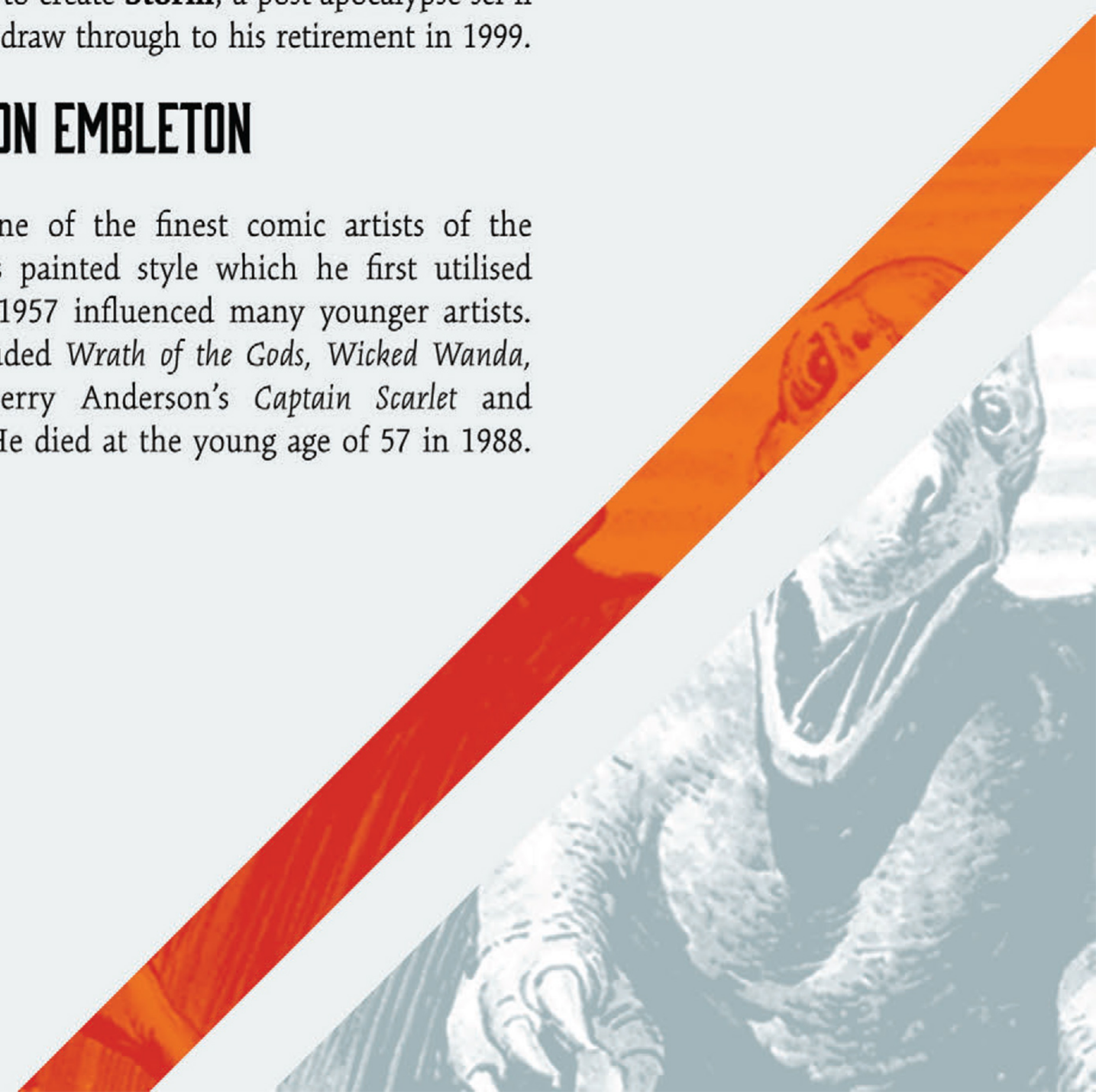
Mike Butterworth is primarily known in comic circles as the writer of *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire*, but had previously written *Battler Briton* and *Buffalo Bill* strips for **Comet**, for **Sun** he wrote *Max Bravo, The Happy Hussar* and *Billy the Kid* (which was drawn by, amongst others, Don Lawrence). *The Trigan Empire* began in 1965 in **Ranger**, and continued when **Ranger** was absorbed into **Look and Learn** where it continued to be published through to 1982. From 1967 he also wrote crime novels under his full name, John Michael Butterworth, and gothic romances under the pseudonyms of Carola Salisbury and Sarah Kemp.

DON LAWRENCE

Don Lawrence was born in 1928, and worked for Mick Anglo on the **Marvelman** comic produced for Amalgamated Press, and then *Billy the Kid* in the comic **Sun**. When **Sun** was absorbed into **Lion** he moved on to illustrating *Olac the Gladiator*, *Karl the Viking* and *Maroc the Mighty*. In 1965 he teamed with Mike Butterworth to create *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire* for **Ranger** magazine, and continued to paint the comic through its transition into **Look and Learn** through to 1976. During this period he also worked on *Fireball XL5* and *The Adventures of Tarzan* comic strips for **TV Century 21**. After leaving *The Trigan Empire* he worked with a Dutch publisher to create **Storm**, a post-apocalypse sci-fi series, which he would draw through to his retirement in 1999.

RON EMBLETON

Ron Embleton was one of the finest comic artists of the 20th Century, and his painted style which he first utilised on *Wulf the Briton* in 1957 influenced many younger artists. Career highlights included *Wrath of the Gods*, *Wicked Wanda*, and his work on Gerry Anderson's *Captain Scarlet* and *Stingray* comic strips. He died at the young age of 57 in 1988.



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INDEPENDENT

"Don [Lawrence] painted a comic I loved. It was called the Trigan Empire – two comic pages a week, in the children's magazine "Look and Learn", which even schools who banned comics allowed"
NEIL GAIMAN

"Lawrence [is] celebrated for his richly coloured, highly detailed visions of fantastic worlds."
THE NEW YORK TIMES

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